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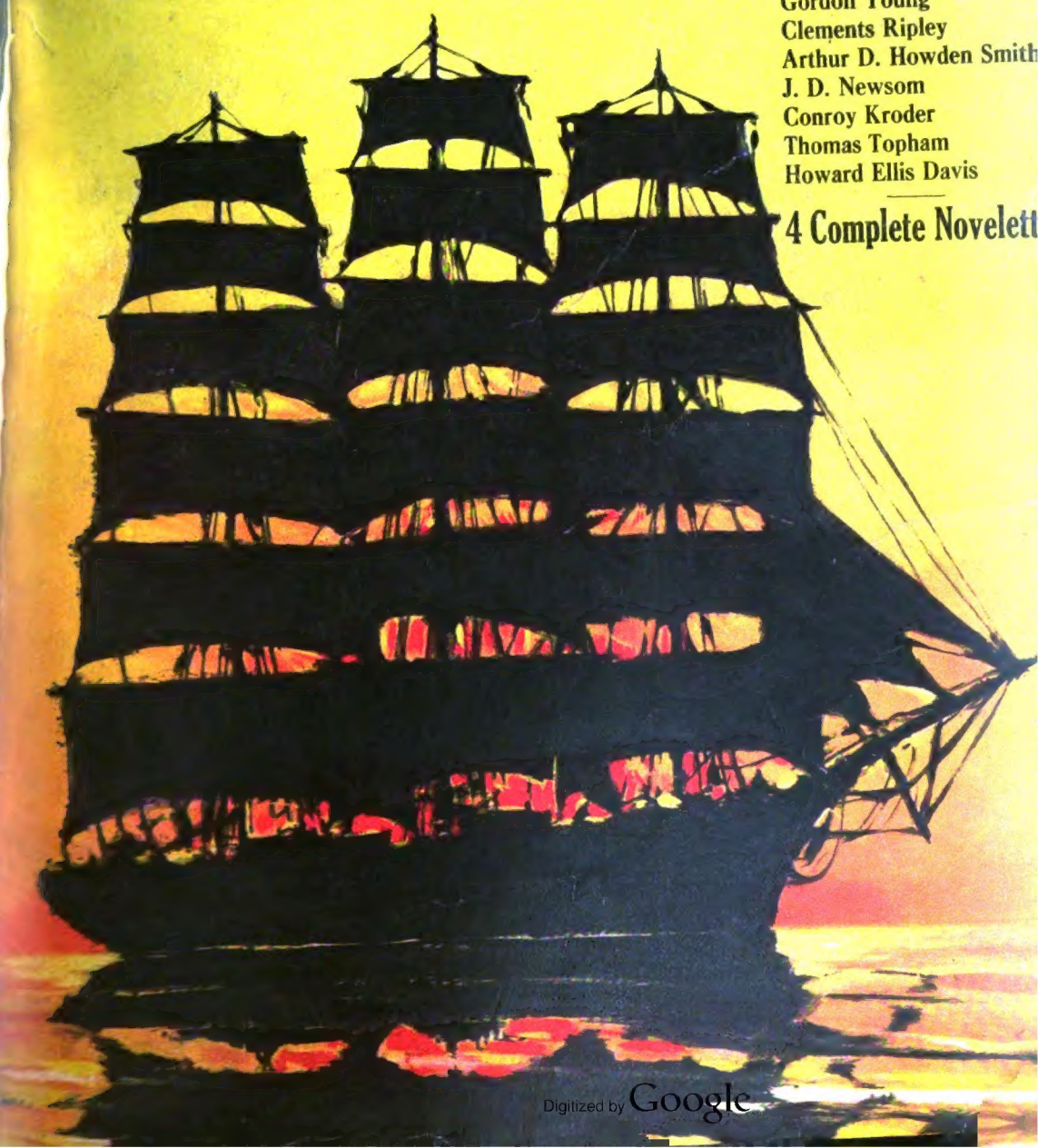
Adventure

W. C. Tuttle
Bill Adams
Sidney Herschel Small
Gordon Young
Clements Ripley
Arthur D. Howden Smith
J. D. Newsom
Conroy Kroder
Thomas Topham
Howard Ellis Davis

4 Complete Novelett



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"Occasionally one of our stories will be called an "Off-the-Trail" story, a warning that it is in some way different from the usual magazine stories, perhaps a little different, perhaps a good deal. It may violate a canon of literature or a custom of magazines, or merely be different from the type usually found in this magazine. The difference may lie in unusual theme, material, ending, or manner of telling. No question of relative merit is involved.

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Headings . . . . . **George M. Richards**

Cover Design . . . . . **H. C. Murphy**

One Serial, Three Complete Novelettes

WHEN General George Washington looked over his Revolutionary War officers to find General St. Clair's successor, his eye lighted upon "*Mad Anthony*" *Wayne*, who profited by his predecessor's failure and refused to march against the allied tribes until he had adequate provisions and well-drilled men. Scouting was no mean position in his personelle, and foremost among his information gatherers was *Peter Watson*. Returned from a hazardous mission, accompanied by his friends, *Old Podge*, who feared *White Tom*, and *Durgin*, who was a better fighter than inventor, *Watson* thought to have a rest from scouting and sought to enjoy life at Cincinnati, but he soon found himself volunteering for another dangerous task. "THE LONG KNIVES," a five-part serial of post-Revolutionary days, by Hugh Pendexter begins in the next issue.

"*MR. RACK*," said the chief, "the auld man is wreckin' the lad's life!" This was the verdict of the *Askelon's* crew against *Ironfist* for his harsh treatment of his son, *Dickie*, the third mate. But when *Dickie* stirred up a hornet's nest on the Genoa waterfront and got a stiletto between the ribs, *Ironfist* descended from the bridge and with a cold eye and hard hand put in an unexpected lick. "IRONFIST," a complete novelette, by W. Townend in the next issue.

"*SCOLLOP'S* fired me," exclaimed *Jack Montfort*, cowboy, "but I'm going to break him at his own game. I'll take his last steer, his last horse and his last section of land." From that time on *Montfort* lived only to become an expert revolver shot and to acquire the necessary equipment of a "poker sharp." "GAMBLER'S QUALIFICATIONS," a complete novelette, by Barry Scobee, in the next issue.

A STRANGE situation arises off a South Sea island when two men board a schooner, each claiming to be the same person. The skipper accepts each man at his face value, and watches warily, for there will be fast shooting and death for the first to make a false move. "THE SLICK GUY," a complete novelette, by Frederick Moore in the next issue.

Other stories in the next issue are forecast on the last page of this one.

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Adventure
VOL. XLIV
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1923

SWAIN JARL-MAKER

A Complete Novelette

by ARTHUR D. HOWDEN SMITH

Author of "Swain's Sons," "Swain's Burning," etc.

WHEN young Jarl Harald Maddad's son had reached his twentieth year his cousin, Jarl Rognvald, who had ruled the Orkneys as many years as Jarl Harald had lived, decided that he would win honor for his name and merit for his soul by undertaking a voyage to Jorsalaheim,* leaving in Jarl Harald's hands the government of the islands. And therefore he called a Thing at Orphir in Hrossey, which was attended by all the boendr and odalmen, of whom the greatest was Swain Olaf's son, who dwelt principally in Gairsey but held lands likewise in Caithness and other parts.

Jarl Rognvald was beloved by the Orkney-folk, and they were much affected when he explained his intentions to them and asked who would go with him Jorsala-faring.

"As you all know," he said, "my cousin, Jarl Harald, and I spent the last Winter at the court of King Ingi in Norway, and there we were privileged to meet several chiefs who have dwelt in the Holy City and served likewise in the armies of the Greek Emperor who sits in Mikligard.† They told us that no man could consider himself as having done all that he should to ennoble his name unless he visited these two cities and observed the strange lands and seas which intervene between them and our countries.

"Now, I am no longer as young as I was once upon a time, and if I am ever to go Jorsala-faring it must be soon. Moreover I am fortunate in that Jarl Harald is come to man's estate, and thanks to the efforts of Swain and others of you who have aided me in his education, he is thoroughly familiar with the task of government. So I am resolved to fare eastward with the coming of the Spring, and a large company of my friends from Norway go with me. My purpose in summoning this meeting is to acquaint you with my intention, and also to invite all who can to join me."

Many chiefs and farmers promptly offered to attend the Jarl or send their sons or aid him with money and gear; but the Jarl was vexed to perceive that Swain

*Jerusalem.

†Constantinople.

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Olaf's son, the most important of all, held his tongue and even glowered with hostile disapproval.

"What is this, Swain?" he demanded. "Have you no good word to say for my venture? I have assisted you in many viking cruises in the past when the motive was less worthy."

Swain was a man of short speech, very direct withal and fearless of any. He was big of his body, strong, tireless, with cold, unwinking blue eyes and a huge red-gold beard that bristled when he became angry.

"I am as true a friend as you have, Lord Jarl," he answered bluntly. "But I think you must be bewitched to contemplate such a plan."

"I was never more sensible," returned the Jarl. "The Islands have been peaceful for several years, and there is no reason to doubt they will continue so. If you say the expedition will be expensive my answer is that I shall pick up sufficient plunder upon the way to reward me and my friends."

"I do not doubt there will be plenty of plunder," rejoined Swain. "But I wonder whether you will find your Jarldom when you return."

"Why?" asked the Jarl.

"When the chief is away there will be easy takings."

Young Jarl Harald spoke up at this.

"I shall be here, Swain," he said haughtily. "Am not I the chief when Rognvald is away?"

"You are a chief, a very young chief," replied Swain. "But you are not Jarl Rognvald."

"It will be seen very soon how young a chief I am," blustered the boy. "My friends will support me at need."

Swain smiled.

"I have been your best friend, Harald," he said. "It was I who brought you into the Orkneys and persuaded Jarl Rognvald to give you a share of the Jarldom."

"That is true," assented Jarl Rognvald. "Whatever he says, Harald, Swain is your best friend."

"He does not talk like it," returned the boy bitterly. "Nor is he willing to let any of his men go viking-faring with me in the Spring, as he used to do."

"And for that," remarked Swain, "I have a very good reason."

"What?" inquired Jarl Rognvald.

Jarl Harald looked sulky but said nothing.

"When you were in Bjorgvin* last Winter, Lord Jarl," answered Swain, "among the chiefs from Mikligard and Jorsalaheim you talked with was Olvir Rosta, grandson of Frakork the witch, whom I slew. Olvir has been the death of my father and my two brothers. I have sworn undying vengeance against him as both you and Jarl Harald know."

"Yes, yes, Swain," interrupted Jarl Rognvald, "but it was not for me to slay him in the streets of Bjorgvin. He is not my mortal enemy. And while I would do much for you, even help you against Olvir at need, I can not assume your quarrels in the presence of the King."

"That may be so," admitted Swain. "Although I take it ill, Lord Jarl, that you and Jarl Harald should have received him intimately into your company. More especially, I take it ill that Jarl Harald should have allowed Olvir to speak evil of me, permitting this poison to enter his heart and turn his natural kindness for me into hatred."

Jarl Harald jumped up with flaming face.

"If I hate you, Swain, it is your own doing," he cried. "Because you have fostered me since I was a child you presume to criticize me and say what I shall do or shall not do. Well, there is an end of that. I am my own master, yes, and your master, seeing that I am Jarl and you a mere boendr; and as Jarl Rognvald has just told you I am to sit in his place while he is gone and rule as best seems me."

"It will be an evil best if you rule according to Olvir's way," returned Swain calmly. "You serve to convince me that I was right in believing he has already twisted you to his purpose. This is most unfortunate, and it illustrates, Lord Jarl—" he turned to Rognvald—"why I refused to aid Jarl Harald in his next viking cruise. I have not fought and hated Olvir Rosta all these years only to allow my men and gear perhaps to be employed in some plot he has an interest in."

Jarl Rognvald was much disturbed.

"I would not have had this happen for all the gold in my chest," he said. "Harald, it is my will that you speak Swain fair. He has been a good friend to us, and to you more than to me, and it does not become us, either you or me, to nourish an alliance with one who is his deadly enemy."

*Bergen.

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"I have no alliance with Olvir," answered Harald sullenly; "but I think there is much in what he says when he complains that he has offered for years to pay manbote and scathe to Swain, who will not hear of it."

A terrible look appeared in Swain's face.

"The debt which Olvir owes me can be quenched only in blood," he growled. "Tell him that when you see him."

And he turned to pass from the ranks of the Thing. But Jarl Rognvald sprang up and seized him by the arm.

"You shall not go away in this mood, Swain!" he exclaimed. "You are too close to me. Forget what has passed, and promise me that while I am gone you will do all that you can to preserve the peace and safeguard the islands."

Swain considered, his hand upon his sword.

"Must you really go, Lord Jarl?" he asked at length. "If you could relinquish your journey——"

"No, no. My honor is at stake. Also I have pledged myself to meet certain of my friends from Norway by next Easter for the start of the voyage, and a new dragon is building for me on Bjorgvin strand. I must go, Swain. That is settled. It can not be helped."

"Very well then," said Swain. "Much blood will flow from it. I am no spae-man, Lord Jarl, but I warn you men will say your Jorsala-faring was the unluckiest event since you became Jarl."

"But why, Swain? Why do you say this? What reason have you?"

Swain pointed toward Jarl Harald.

"Young head, hot blood. Already he forgets what little he owes to me, and concerns himself with my worst enemy. Nor is that all. It requires a just hand as well as a heavy to order our people. With Jarl Harald roving loose and Olvir Rosta striving to muddy troubled waters, I see misfortune for the innocent."

"Be easy with the boy and help him," pleaded Jarl Rognvald.

Swain shook his head.

"I am easy, Lord Jarl, but what I say means nothing to him against what Olvir has poured into his ears."

"I will speak to him——"

"No, you will make him the more bitter. Let him be. I can care for myself."

"Ah, but will you care for the Orkney-folk?"

Swain grinned.

"I make no promises, Lord Jarl."

Jarl Harald, out of earshot of their immediate conversation, hailed his cousin from afar.

"Let Swain be, Rognvald. I can succeed very well without him. It is time somebody showed him that he is not Jarl by more than the lack of the title."

A grim frown was Jarl Rognvald's answer.

"Boy, boy," he cried, "you will be fortunate if you do not meet me lamenting when I return. Remember, I lay one command upon you, and that is, whatever else you do, do not quarrel with Swain."

"It is simple enough to command," returned Jarl Harald sourly.

The Thing broke up in a mood of uneasiness and dread. To men who came to him privately and asked what course he would pursue Swain replied:

"I am Jarl Rognvald's man. Whatever I do, I will do for his benefit."

And as this was noised abroad people felt more comfortable, yet there was a spirit of foreboding and unrest when Jarl Rognvald's dragons headed east a few weeks later, great red crosses sprawled across their sails. Bishop William and a score of the wisest and most powerful chiefs in the islands accompanied the expedition. They had many remarkable adventures and acquired much honor, but their story has no place here.

II

WHEN nothing untoward happened after Jarl Rognvald's departure the Orkney-folk began to reconsider their fears and men went about more cheerfully. Jarl Harald sailed on a viking cruise, according to his custom, with three longships, and Swain and the other chief men administered the government in his absence. The young Jarl joined himself to an expedition led by King Eystein Gilli's son from Norway which ravaged both in Scotland and England, and in the course of it Harald became more friendly than ever with Olvir Rosta, who as a warrior of prominence commanded a dragon for the King and maintained many house-carls on liberal wages.

Jarl Harald himself was a strong, tall youth, very ugly as to features. He had naturally a good disposition, but was headstrong on account of having shared since

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childhood the rule of the islands with Jarl Rognvald, and was easily flattered by older men who ministered to his vanity. As has been said, it was Swain Olaf's son who took him when a small boy from his father, Jarl Maddad of Atjoklar in Scotland, and induced Jarl Rognvald and the Orkney Thing to accept him as Jarl with Rognvald, sharing half-and-half in the ownership of the islands. It was a saying of Swain's: "One Jarl rules with force; two Jarls rule with justice."

But Harald, who formerly had regarded Swain above all other men, as he grew older came to resent Swain's efforts to guide his ways and was already inclined to make trouble when he first fell under the influence of Olvir, who always had hated Swain and devoted his whole life either to intriguing against Swain or to acquiring means for new efforts to secure his death or misfortune. This Harald had likewise the usual restless disposition of young men and resented Jarl Rognvald's greater power, for as usually happens in such cases, although Harald and Rognvald were supposed to share equally the rule of the islands, Rognvald, because of his age and the prestige of his name as well as his experience and skill, was able to do as he pleased regardless of whether Harald was favorable to his plans or not.

Swain knew all this and was willing to make allowance for it. Therefore he dwelt quietly in his skalli at Gairsey with his mother, Asleif, and Erik, an Icelander, who was his forecastle man when he went to sea and commanded his house-carls, a little man with a face tanned like leather, abrupt in his ways and dry of speech and possessed of great store of wise sayings. Swain had met him when he lived several years in Man, and had made him forecastle man in place of Osbiorn Grim's son, who had died in a seafight off Jarlsness on the coast of Bretland* in which Olvir Rosta had slain Gunni, Swain's younger brother.

Asleif devoted herself to the rearing of Swain's two sons, whose mother, Ingrid, had been Queen in Man and whom Swain had placed in a nunnery in the Syllingar in punishment for her evil ways. She has no place in this story. The children at this time were several years old, and their grandmother centered her life around them, for she lived always with a fear that Swain might be slain in the course of his feud with Olvir or in some overseas venture, and she was jealous lest their family should come to an end. She was tall in her person with a still, grave face, wholly fearless as to herself and well thought of for her wisdom.

Matters went along in this wise quietly enough throughout the Summer and into the Autumn, when Jarl Harald returned with good store of booty. There was an early Winter, and all sober-minded men were anxious to get in the crops; but Harald insisted upon his ships' companies celebrating the success of their voyage. Much ill-feeling was stirred up by reason of this in that many farmers were short-handed for the harvest while several hundred brawny fellows were swilling themselves with ale in Harald's drinking-hall at Kirkiuvag†. Yet after a week this episode was forgotten, and by itself it would not have created all the trouble which followed.

Later, however, there was grumbling when Jarl Harald demanded that certain of his people deliver him quantities of ale

*Britain.

†Kirkwall.

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to make up for all that his men had drunk. It was said that if he had paid proper attention to the administration of his personal estate he would have had sufficient ale to feast his guests without calling upon others for what they required for their personal needs.

This too would have been forgotten in time; but in the midst of a Yule feast, which was without parallel for drunkenness and roystering, Jarl Harald and a small company of his men spirited away the daughter of a farmer who was friendly to Swain. Jarl Harald paid scathe to the father afterward, and the girl was wedded to one of the party that had kidnapped her, but men said many hard things about the deed.

The next disturbance came in the Spring when Jarl Harald was passing through the islands in a ten-oared barge. He stopped with a tenant of Swain's one night, and in the morning had a dispute with the man over payment for certain gear his attendants had broken. The upshot of it was that Harald's men beat Swain's tenant severely and went off without paying him anything. Swain was very wroth about this and sent word to Jarl Harald that he expected a heavy payment in settlement by those who had given the beating. Jarl Harald's answer was not courteous, and he took himself off in his dragon to Norway, where he met Olvir Rosta and made a speculative voyage with him into the Baltic.

Merchants passed back and forth continually between the Orkneys and Norway, and the Summer was not half over when Swain heard a rumor, which was later confirmed, that Jarl Harald intended to bring Olvir home with him and settle him upon the Jarl's lands. There was murmuring amongst all the boendr over this, for no man liked Olvir, who was an outlaw for his various crimes and had wrought much harm in those parts. Swain alone said nothing. What he did was to seek out an Iceland merchant named Thorhall Asgrim's son, a friend of Erik, who was on the point of sailing from Kirkiuvag for Bjorgvin, and charge him with a message to Jarl Harald, asking if these reports were true.

A month afterward another merchant, a Daneman, fetched a written answer, which was read for Swain by Father Bjarni, the priest of Vigr. It was as follows:

"The most noble Harald Maddad's son, Jarl of the Orkneys and kin of the Kings, from Bjorgvin in Norway to Swain Olaf's son, a boendr in the isle of Gairsey in Orkney, greetings by the hand of Brother Liotolf, a monk of the priory of St. Olaf.

"I have received your message by the mouth of Thorhall Asgrim's son. I purpose to do in this affair as I see fit. It is time you were required to restrict your private feuds which already have been a sore grievance to all the Orkney-folk. Olvir Rosta offers to pay whatever manbote I judge to be fair. If you are not satisfied with this you had best hold your peace or leave the islands and go elsewhere."

Swain called Erik unto him after the letter was read, and repeated it to him.

"Olvir was at his elbow when that was written," said the Icelander.

"True, and Olvir's tongue speaks through his mouth," answered Swain. "This is a sad day. I once looked upon Jarl Harald as my own son. Now I shall have to——"

He broke off, and Erik regarded him curiously.

"Shall you raise the Orkney-folk against him, Swain?" he asked.

"No," said Swain. "That is not the way to go about it. They would not follow me, who am a common man like themselves."

"Then what?"

"This," replied Swain. "In Thorsa, on the mainland of Scotland, lives Erlend, the son of Jarl Harald, who was Jarl Rognvald's brother and who died from a poisoned shirt which was made by Frakork the witch, Olvir Rosta's grandmother—she whom I slew in Sudrland many years ago. There was never good feeling between Jarl Rognvald and his brother Jarl Harald, nor did the Orkney-folk like Jarl Harald, who was suspected of too much intimacy with Frakork.

"Men even said that she had meant the shirt which was Harald's bane for Rognvald, but Harald donned it by mistake. At any rate, the end of it was that Erlend Harald's son, who was then a child, had nothing of his father's estate except the lands at Thorsa, and on them he has dwelt ever since. It chanced that some years past I saved him from drowning in the Pentland Firth, which is the reason why I am acquainted with him, for he has lived in obscurity in order not to attract the notice of Jarl Rognvald, who, to be honest, has always looked upon him as a danger to his own security."

"And what manner of man is he?" asked Erik.

Swain took a turn up and down the floor

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of the hall of his skalli in which they sat at the ale.

"To be honest a second time, Erik, he is not a man of much ability," he answered at last. "I have reason to suppose him a drunkard, and it is certain that while he was brought up with very small means he has endeavored little to improve his condition. He has small wealth and few followers, and his expeditions are never very successful."

"Wherein then should he be more acceptable to us than Jarl Harald?" inquired Erik. "For I take it that your plan is to put Erlend in Harald's place."

"That is correct," responded Swain. "Such is my design. I believe that if Erlend has no great merit that will be of advantage to us, as it will work to make him amenable to our influence. He has had no taste of power such as has gone to Jarl Harald's head, and he will not be disposed to override his advisers."

"But what of Jarl Rognvald?" suggested Erik. "Will he——"

"Jarl Rognvald flouted my advice and left the islands," said Swain curtly. "I warned him this would happen. Yet I will do whatever I can to protect his interest, and indeed I am persuaded that in replacing Harald with Erlend I am acting for his advantage, since Harald has driven the islands into a turmoil and if he brings in Olvir Rosta as he threatens to there will be war."

"War will come of your action regardless of what Harald's plans may be," pointed out Erik. "And men will lay the blame upon you instead of Harald."

"My shoulders are broad enough to carry much blame," commented Swain. "I have never shrunk from criticism. Also it has always been my policy to strike before my adversary. I shall take Harald by surprize, and it may be we can teach him a lesson and curb his mischief-making in time to avert any serious fighting."

Erik wagged his head gloomily.

"I do not read Jarl Harald as one to whom you can teach a lesson without much blood-letting," he responded. "And it is in my mind that our future fortune must depend mainly upon the conduct of Erlend."

"I shall order his conduct," answered Swain confidently. "If the boendr give us the support I expect we shall have little trouble."

"Little trouble or big, much blood will flow of this," declared Erik.

Nor was he in the wrong, for in the struggle which followed more men lost lives and limbs than in any similar war since Sigurd Glumra's son was made first Jarl of the Orkneys.

III

IN ORDER not to attract attention to his errand Swain sailed from Gairsey to Dungelsbae in Caithness, where he had an extensive property, and from there with an escort of a dozen men rode overland to Thorsa eastward on the coast of the Pentland Firth. He came to Thorsa near dusk of an evening in late Summer and asked his way to the steading of Erlend Harald's son. It was an inconspicuous establishment by the shore, not so large nor commodious in its arrangements as Swain's in Gairsey. A few serving-men lounged in the stead yard, and of these Swain asked where their master might be found. They pointed to the skalli.

Swain dismounted from his horse and bade his men await him, then strode across the yard and entered the skalli door. He traversed the anteroom, with its ale-barrels and clutter of furniture and old weapons, and felt his way in the darkness to the door into the hall. Within, the darkness was scarcely relieved by the low fire that flickered on the hearth and the three or four torches in brackets on the walls; but Swain had keen eyes, and he presently discerned a man sitting by himself, huddled over the high table, mead-cup in hand, gaze fixed upon the foul rushes of the floor.

With a clank of armor Swain stepped forward, and the man raised his head.

"Who are you?" he demanded in a petulant voice.

"I am Swain Olaf's son. Once, years ago, we met on Pentland Firth when all was not well with you."

A derisive light kindled in the sullen eyes of the man at the high table.

"I remember," he answered. "You were for handing me over to Jarl Rognvald that he might shave and lodge me in a monastery and so make certain I should never dispute his rule. But I bought safety from you by telling you where Frakork and Olvir Rosta then hid."

"It is so," acknowledged Swain. "And

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now I have another proposal to place before you."

Erlend drained the mead-cup before he replied:

"Consider well what you say, Swain. You were not overcourteous to me upon that occasion, and I might feel disposed to take advantage of your presence here. You could afford to pay a rich ransom—and money and gear are things I lack most dolefully."

Swain laughed almost contemptuously.

"I am no man to be taken and held for ransom, Erlend. Greater men than you have tried and failed. But it is not my purpose to bicker with you. I have a plan which will be for your advantage——"

"And yours?" sneered Erlend.

"And mine. Should I waste my energy upon you alone? You are not so close a friend as to command my substance without compensation. Briefly, I desire to know whether you will receive me in friendship, seeing that I come in friendship to propose something to our mutual profit."

Erlend frowned at the rafters, reached under the table and pulled out an earthen bottle from which he refilled his cup.

"It is in my mind that you are no mead-drinker, Swain," he remarked.

"I am not," said Swain stiffly.

"I thought not. Water-drinker they call you. Well, each man to his taste. For myself——"

He broke off as eight or ten men straggled into the hall, shouting and singing disorderly. Swain turned to them with open contempt, his hand clutching his sword-hilt, half-disposed to fear some trick of his host's. But Erlend rose unsteadily to his feet and waved a command to the newcomers.

"Back, fellows!" he shouted. "Can you not see that I am engaged? Later perhaps. But now I am occupied with business."

One of the group by the door chuckled drunkenly.

"You occupied with business after candle-lighting time, Erlend? Ha, ha, that is rare sport for mirth! I see your cup at your elbow and a strange face beside you, but that is no reason to turn away loyal tablemates."

Erlend laughed unwillingly.

"None the less, what I tell you is true," he insisted. "For tonight you must excuse me. Swain Olaf's son is come from the Orkneys, and we have much to discuss together."

One of the drunkards who was more sober than the others commenced to shepherd them toward the door.

"He must be a dull-witted man or he would be blithe of the chance to drink with us," grumbled the vociferous one.

"Yes, yes," proclaimed another. "You are in no debt to the Orkney-folk, Erlend. It is we who are your friends."

"You will be the cause of offending my guest," rejoined Erlend. "Be off with you. It is seldom I refuse to join your roystering."

They clumped out through the anteroom, mumbling and complaining amongst themselves, a snatch of ribald song drifting behind them. Swain turned to Erlend with a gesture of disgust.

"It is seldom you refuse to join their roystering! That is an ill thing to say of yourself, Erlend Harald's son, you who have in your veins the blood of Jarls and Kings."

Erlend fumbled with his mead-cup.

"Little good I ever had of my blood," he muttered. "It has been no more than a source of extravagance, demanding that I live beyond my means, devoured by unrealized ambitions and plagued by the knowledge of my misfortunes and the injustice of others I was powerless to resent."

Swain leaned toward him.

"How would you like to be Jarl and have broad lands and hundreds of men to row in your longships and fight for you?" he asked.

"It does not become you, Swain, to jeer at me," responded Erlend with a show of temper.

"I am not jeering," replied Swain. "I have come here to make you an offer such as you have never received and which may well be the turning-point of your life. But——"

He halted, and his fierce blue eyes bored into Erlend's face until the mead-drinker's gaze dropped.

"Well, well!" rasped Erlend sourly. "What is it? What is this offer? And this 'but'?"

"It will be of no use to you if you heed the advice of men like those who were just here," said Swain.

"They are my friends," blustered Erlend.

"And worthless to you."

"What right have you to——"

"What good have they ever done you?

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Have they fought battles for you? Have they helped you gain a mark of property or a word of honorable mention?"

Erlend's bowed head was the only answer.

"Well, does my offer interest you?" demanded Swain after a moment.

"Any offer must interest me—as you know," answered Erlend, looking up. "But do not mock my friends. At the least they are—my friends."

"Will they support you if you lay claim to your father's share of the Orkneys?" countered Swain.

"Why not?" asked Erlend with a touch of cynicism. "As Jarl of the Orkneys my friendship would be worth more to them. But you are talking at a venture, Swain. I am no fool, and all men know how strongly established are Rognvald and Harald."

"Jarl Rognvald is become a Jorsalafarer," replied Swain. "But you may dismiss him from your thoughts. He is my just lord and friend, and I will not aid you or any other man to make him trouble or deprive him of his lands. With Jarl Harald it is different. He has stirred the Orkneyfolk against himself, and they are ripe to cast off his rule if sufficient excuse be given to them. Are you man enough to brave his wrath, risking sea-fight and land-battle?"

Erlend flushed.

"As you reminded me, there is the blood of Jarls and Kings in me," he said. "Men have called me niddering, but none has said that I was a coward."

"Also you must be guided by me if you embark upon the undertaking," added Swain.

"What undertaking, Swain? Here have so far been words and promises."

"Do not concern yourself for that," remarked Swain dourly. "If I promise I perform. I am not without power in the Orkneys, and I can raise you to Jarl Harald's place if, as I have told you, you will accept my advice."

"I should be foolish if I did not," replied Erlend promptly. "It is to be supposed that your plan is an honorable one, of course."

"It is," affirmed Swain. "But you must remember that no worthy object can be accomplished in a day. To overthrow Jarl Harald, whatever his mistakes, we must move carefully. I think that first you should go upon a visit to King Malcolm of Scotland at Apardion.*"

*Aberdeen.

"Why?" asked Erlend, surprized.

"Because if he is approached wisely he will give you the title of Scots Jarl of one-half Caithness. I am known to him and his advisers, and as I shall accompany you, there will be no difficulty about that."

Erlend moistened his lips doubtfully, staring in blank amazement at this man who had come in to him from the night and so casually offered him great honors.

"And then?" he queried, his voice husky with emotion.

"Then? Then you shall come into the Orkneys with a suitable company and enough men to guarantee you against attack, but maintaining strict peace toward Jarl Harald. And you shall make formal demand upon him that he render to you one-half the islands—which will be his half and not Rognvald's—and when he refuses, you will go to Norway and make suit with the King for your rights."

"And then?"

Erlend's voice was little more than a whisper now. He was gazing into the shadows of the hall, where he saw himself in gilded mail, leading companies of red-tunicked house-carls, sailing with a dozen dragons at his back, feasted by the King in Bjorgvin.

"If you manage things well the King will probably grant your suit. Jarl Harald is not regarded highly in Norway. In any case it can do no harm to make the attempt; and while you are away my friends and I will be inciting the boendr and the common men in your favor, and if Jarl Harald continues as he has begun he will secure you new adherents from week to week through the Winter. By the Spring the islands will be ripe to meet you, and we can muster a force sufficient to defeat Jarl Harald."

"Defeat him?"

Erlend crouched forward over the table; his hands opened and shut.

"In very truth, Swain?"

"I have said it," answered Swain calmly. "I can match wits with young Harald any day, and if it comes to men my strength is equal to his. All I require is a name for the common folk to rally to. That will be you."

"We will do it," cried Erlend.

He drained his mead-cup and flung it from him.

"You shall never be sorry for this, Swain."

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"It will not be I who suffer for it if I am," returned Swain.

IV

MATTERS proceeded now as Swain had foreseen. King Malcolm, who was no more than a youth, had a great admiration for Swain because of his exploits, which were discussed in all the northern countries and recited by skalds whenever men sat at the ale-drinking. He readily agreed to confer upon Erlend the title of Jarl in Caithness, which was held of the Scots King likewise by Rognvald and Harald, for in those days, as indeed for long afterward, the Jarls of the Orkneys owed allegiance both to Norway and Scotland for the dominions they held although they were tied closer to the Norse folk than to the Scots.

At Swain's suggestion Erlend offered King Malcolm a fair gift of fur robes and a massy gold brooch, which the King was pleased to accept, and Swain and Erlend went north again in high favor. It was now the beginning of Autumn, and Jarl Harald had returned to Kirkiuvag, bringing with him in his train Olvir Rosta, who was become his principal counselor; and there was much feasting in the young Jarl's borg. Swain received word of this from Erik at Gairsey as soon as he and Erlend reached Thorsa from Apardion, and he advised Erlend that they should move at once to present Erlend's demands to Jarl Harald before the Winter made sea-travel more difficult.

Erlend was so taken with the prospect of power which Swain held out to him that he borrowed money and war-gear upon the security of the property he held and raised a very considerable number of men, sufficient to man three longships. It is to be said for him that he was noted in Caithness and Sudrland and the Sudreyar* and even as far off as Irland for his hospitality. No man ever came into his skalli without being given food and liquor. And moreover every restless youth and those who had harvested their crops and looked forward only to a Winter of idleness were glad of the opportunity of an expedition which would take them to Norway and the King's court and promised rich booty and perhaps rewards in land if Erlend won his demands from Jarl Harald.

*Hebrides.

Swain left Thorsa before Erlend's expedition was begun,* and returned to Gairsey in order that he might not be implicated in it at that time and might also have occasion to look over the situation in the islands and lay plans with his own friends for using whatever occurred to best advantage. He found that men were still grumbling as bitterly as in the past Spring, and that nothing had aroused more resentment than Harald's introduction of Olvir Rosta to their midst. Swain himself said nothing about this; but Asleif, his mother, and Erik observed that he went about his affairs with lips shut fast and a fiercely remote look upon his bearded face.

A week later word came from Caithness to Jarl Harald that Erland was sailing to secure a share in the Orkneys with him; and Jarl Harald abandoned carousing long enough to dispatch messengers to the chief boendr requesting them to attend a Thing at Kirkiuvag to discuss plans for contesting Erlend's demands. Swain went to this Thing with Erik and many of his friends, to certain of whom he had already disclosed his full intentions. And he dispatched a messenger in a fast sailing-boat to meet Erlend off the coast of Caithness and urge him to hasten on to Kirkiuvag so that he might reach it before the Thing dispersed.

The Thing was held in an open space in front of Jarl Harald's borg. At one side stood the Jarl with Olvir Rosta beside him and three score house-carls at his back. In a half-circle facing him were the boendr and odalmen. The chief of them had named Swain spokesman for their number, and it was the feeling of all that an effort should be made to compromise the issue between Jarl Harald and Erlend. Swain agreed with this feeling, for, as he had told Erlend in the first place, more time was required to build up a sentiment in the islands which would lead the boendr to accept plans for Jarl Harald's overthrow; but he was resolved to use the chance offered by the Thing to add to Jarl Harald's unpopularity and to make plain his own resentment over the Jarl's admission to their ranks of Olvir Rosta.

"This is an easy matter to be disposed of," announced Jarl Harald in opening the Thing. "Erlend Harald's son has had the impudence to declare that he will compel me to accept him as Jarl with myself. He has

*Ready; equipped.

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induced the Scots King to make him Jarl in Caithness, and over him there I can exert no influence except to protect my own property if he attacks it. But in the Orkneys it is different, and I look to all my men to lend me the necessary aid to teach him a worthy lesson."

"It is your intention, then, to attack him?" asked Swain.

"Yes."

"We are not disposed to risk our lives in such a battle if it is not necessary," said Swain. "Why can not you arrive at a composition with him?"

Jarl Harald clinched his fist angrily.

"That is poor advice to offer me," he barked. "Why should I compromise concerning that which is my own?"

"So you say," returned Swain evenly, "yet Erlend says contrary. Let us suppose that he is upheld in his demand. What would become of us who resisted him?"

"Those who support me can come to no harm," said Jarl Harald. "I will see to that."

"Yet those who support you already have come to harm," answered Swain.

"How?" demanded Jarl Harald uncomfortably.

"I see Olvir Rosta beside you," said Swain. "He is an outlaw in these islands, and Jarl Rognvald would never admit him here, knowing him to be not only my enemy but the enemy of all honest men."

"That is not true," spoke up Jarl Harald.

And Olvir, with an expression of meekness upon his swart, evil face, called out:

"Not so! I am, it is true, Swain's enemy, or rather he is my enemy. But I am no enemy to others. And so far as Swain is concerned, I have offered him, and now offer him again, whatever manbote Jarl Harald or any number of other men here present may judge owing to him on account of harm I have done him. And I say this notwithstanding that Swain himself slew my grandmother, an old woman and peaceful."

Swain laughed ironically at this, and many joined with him in his mirth. One old bondi answered:

"What you say is a lie, Olvir. You have done harm to others. You were always a roysterer, as your name proves, and it was for that, no less than the wicked deeds you wrought against Swain's family, that Jarl Rognvald made you an outlaw and the Thing proclaimed it. As for Frakork, your grandmother, she was a witch, and if Bishop William were here he would say so with me. She did more mischief in her time than any ten men."

A growl of assent came from the boendr. Jarl Harald flushed.

"You do ill to mock me," he growled. "If Olvir has done harm so have others. He can do no more than he offers. It is a fair offer."

"And his outlawry was a fair outlawry," called another voice.

"I am Jarl, and it is for me to remit outlawry if I see fit," replied the Jarl haughtily.

"No, no," voices answered from the boendr's ranks. "The Thing must ratify outlawry!"

"Not in this case," rejoined Jarl Harald. "Olvir Rosta has stood a good friend to me, and I propose to reward him as——"

A man burst through the ranks of the Thing.

"Three longships are off the beach," he panted. "Erlend is come."

"That is well," said Jarl Harald. "If he is here we shall not have to go to him. It will save us much trouble. My dragons are ready for their crews."

But Swain intervened.

"We will not fight, Lord Jarl," he said.

"No, no," cried the boendr. "No fighting!"

"You are all niddering folk!" bellowed Jarl Harald. "I will go out and fight him with my own people."

Some of the boendr applauded this, and Swain spoke again:

"Hear reason, Lord Jarl," he advised. "We are not united upon this point, and when men are divided they put little heart in their efforts. You have no cause to resent it if I say to you that you have acted so that men are discontented with you."

"You may say that in the Thing but not elsewhere," exclaimed Harald fiercely.

Swain scowled at him.

"No man, no Jarl, ever told me what I could not say," he roared.

Instantly the Thing was in confusion, with swords out and men shouting defiance at each other; but Swain saw to it craftily that the older men came between his partisans and the Jarl's house-carls and friends, and then he himself stepped forward and secured attention once more.

"Sheath swords!" he shouted. "This is no time for fighting, and moreover it is

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against the law to bare steel at a Thing. We should all be dishonored if blood were drawn. Let Jarl Harald take back what he has said, and all will be well."

"I am no man to eat my words," fumed the Jarl.

But Olvir, who was no fool, saw the drift of Swain's policy, which was winning support from those who previously had supported the Jarl, and he whispered in Harald's ear. The Jarl shrugged his shoulders.

"So be it," he agreed finally. "It is not my desire to seem unreasonable," he went on, "and I must admit that you are not all niddering folk. But of Swain I say, whether he likes it or not, that he is a trouble-maker and always was. He is making use now of his hatred of Olvir Rosta to stir up feeling against me."

"There is no need for me to stir up feeling against you on that score, Lord Jarl," answered Swain. "Send away Olvir, and all may yet be well."

"That I will not," swore the Jarl with an oath. "If for no other reason than because you ask it."

Now Swain was by no means anxious to force a definite issue with Jarl Harald. He was a wealthy man, and he foresaw that if there were fighting upon a considerable scale property would be damaged. Therefore he made a proposal which he had not contemplated before.

"Let Olvir go with me unto Birsey Holm and there fight out our differences," he suggested.

But Olvir answered quickly:

"That is not a fair offer, for your friends would take care that I should not escape."

And Jarl Harald said:

"Your feuds have caused enough deaths, Swain. I do not propose to assist you to cause more."

"Very well," replied Swain coldly, "I have done my best to adjust our differences."

"Oh, no, you have not," said the Jarl. "Olvir has offered to pay you any manbote that is deemed fair."

"He owes me three lives," said Swain. "There is not gold in the North to pay for them."

The Jarl turned impatiently to the Thing.

"Are we to discuss forever Swain's private affairs while an enemy lies off the strand?" he asked.

"It was not Swain who brought in Olvir Rosta," shouted a man from the throng.

And again there was a mutter of assent. Swain, watching with a cautious eye how sentiment was forming, decided he had provoked sufficient opposition to the Jarl for the time-being.

"Let me give my counsel," he said. "I do not believe that Erlend will venture to try conclusions with us if we show him a single front. Let us tell him that he should go to Norway and lay his troubles before the King. It will take him until next year to make the voyage east and lodge his suit and return, and by that time many things may have happened. At any rate, it will do no hurt to anyone to put him off."

"But if he will not be put off?" asked the Jarl.

"We can leap that pool when we come to it," returned Swain. "Also it should be remembered that Jarl Rognvald is not here, and he is as much concerned as you are."

Many men echoed this statement, for nobody wished to imperil Jarl Rognvald's interests, both because he was loved by all and because he was absent upon a holy errand.

"Very well," decided Jarl Harald. "Let it be as Swain has said, but if Erlend refuses to be reasonable, then I expect you all to join forces with me, and we will slay him or drive him from the islands."

The boendr said that it should be so, and Swain and several others went aboard Erlend's dragon and told him the terms Jarl Harald offered. Erlend, who had concocted everything beforehand with Swain, gravely accepted them and said that he would sail without loss of time eastward and make suit with the King.

After that the Thing broke up and the boendr returned to their homes; but there was no peace or content in the islands that Winter. Several men were slain in quarrels over the Jarl's difficulties with Swain's faction, and Swain kept six score housecarls in attendance at Gairsey to guard against an attempt by Olvir Rosta to surprize him, he said. Jarl Harald and Olvir, however, were careful to give him a wide berth although they were not so considerate of the rights of poorer men, and there was complaint of young women who disappeared and small cargoes seized and talk of an increase in the Jarl's tribute to meet the expense of his following and the riotous

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lives they lived. For no man of Jarl Harald's gave any thought to fishing or ploughing the land or reaping the harvest.

This was called the Black Winter by reason of the foreboding which was over all and the suffering which came after it.

V

JARL HARALD elected to spend Easter in Caithness, and he and his following sailed thence at the beginning of Passion Week. He lodged himself at Vik and distributed his men among the boendr of Caithness to be entertained for the period of the feast, which the Caithness-folk called the Jarl's way of putting himself in guest-quarters. And there was much indignation over it, for men said that it was for the Jarl and not they, who had other needs for their store, to entertain his house-carls.

The end of it was disputes and more ill-feeling, which came to a head when certain of Jarl Harald's men seized a barge carrying provisions along the coast upon the excuse that it belonged to Erlend. This was untrue, but whether it was or not, men said, Jarl Harald had broken the truce agreed upon, and so bitter did the resentment become that a party of the Caithness-folk, who were friendly to Erlend, set upon and overcame several of the parties of Jarl Harald's house-carls that were spread across the countryside.

Jarl Harald was sobered by the hostility displayed against himself during this incident, and inasmuch as he did not have many friends with him he went aboard his ships and sailed for Kirkiuvag, promising to make proper amends for any harm his people had committed. It was observed afterward that upon this occasion he demonstrated a greater degree of reason than at any time since Jarl Rognvald left; but it was too late. The efforts Swain had set in motion were working steadily to the conclusion he had in mind for them, hastened indeed by the wild conduct of the young Jarl and the bad repute of Olvir Rosta.

While Jarl Harald was on the point of sailing from Vik for Kirkiuvag a messenger from Erlend came to Swain at Gairsey. This messenger was a man named Anakol, who of all Erlend's friends was the wisest and most honorable and was the single one of their number for whom Swain felt any respect.

"What of the Jarl who is yet no Jarl, Anakol?" inquired Swain.

"Why, he is another step forward to attainment of his Jarldom," replied Anakol. "I am come on ahead of him to acquaint you that he and his following will arrive in two day's time off Hofsness, the northernmost point of Strionsey, and he would have you meet him there."

"Humph," growled Swain. "What luck has he had?"

"Fair enough. King Eystein granted his suit, and he bears letters entitling him to the one-half of the islands which Harald holds."

"And Jarl Rognvald's portion is not to be touched?"

"The King bade him keep his hands off Jarl Rognvald's property at peril of losing his head."

"That is well," said Swain, satisfied. "Does he bear a writing from the King?"

"Oh, yes, a parchment smeared over with Latin words and seals and ribbons. It will take a monk to read it, and if Jarl Harald is wise he will say it has less logic than a single arrow nicely fletched."

"We will see, we will see," returned Swain. "I would trust my sword sooner than a monk's gabbling of something another monk claimed to have written. But that is for the future. I will raise my men and we will put off for Strionsey as soon as it is dark."

Swain kept three dragons under sheds on Gairsey strand, and it was a light task for his house-carls and tenants to run them out and load gear and food. In the meantime he dispatched messengers to several wealthy boendr who were privy to his plan and had promised to aid him with men and ships, and these men brought with them after dusk three more dragons. When the fleet was on the point of sailing a man rowed over from Rennadale with the news that Jarl Harald had gone from Vik to Kirkiuvag to escape the hostility of the Caithness-folk his men had plundered. Swain smote his fist upon the gunwale of his great longship, *Deathbringer*, and shouted his delight.

"Now do I see clearly the end of this Jarl," he said. "I made him what he is as truly as his mother brought him into the world, and I shall unmake him just as

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surely. The cords are all ready to bind his limbs."

They came to Hofsness in the early morning light and rode quietly in the shelter of the haven, taking pains that no boats escaped from the island to carry intelligence of their presence south. It was the following morning when Erlend rowed in, with *five* longships instead of the three he had started with. One, King Eystein had given him and the other belonged to a friend he had met in Bjergvin, who had volunteered to aid his expedition. His men were all in good spirits and excellently armed, and Swain perceived with some misgiving that Erlend himself had developed more self-confidence and a higher opinion of his own value.

However, there was no trouble during their first encounter after so many months, and they compared what had happened to each other with entire friendliness. Swain recited the continued injustices by which Jarl Harald had alienated more of the Orkney-folk as well as the boendr in Caithness; and Erlend told with pardonable pride of the success with which he had pleaded his cause before the King and of the royal message he bore, commanding Jarl Harald to give up to him the half of the islands which Harald ruled.

"It is to be remembered," Swain remarked when Erlend had finished, "that the Orkneys are many miles from Norway and the King's writs never run here unless they are supported by a shieldwall. My advice is that we lose no time in conveying the news of your message to Jarl Harald. Let him hear it from us and not from another."

"But you say he will not accept the King's writ," objected Erlend.

"True, and we will not give him opportunity to explain why he will not accept it," responded Swain. "It is my thought that we should fall upon him suddenly at Kirkiuvag, aiming to take him by surprize. If we could capture him the rest would be simple—and the weight of the King's message would be increased."

Erlend had no fault to find with this advice, and they gave the order to their ships to sail at once. They passed between Lyngholm and the south tip of Eidey, bore up for Gja, which is the north point of Hjalpandisey, and steered between Hjalpandisey and Gairsey into the Aurridafiord. It was the evening of Michaelmas when they sighted in the distance the spire of the cathedral church Jarl Rognvald had built to the memory of St. Magnus, his ancestor, and shortly afterward Jarl Harald's lookouts spied the strange longships rowing in from the north and shouted the alarm.

As it happened Jarl Harald had spent that day aboard his longships, uneasy for the disfavor he encountered upon every hand and vaguely fearful of some unexpected blow. But he had only three ships with him and dared not give battle to the eleven with Swain and Erlend. So he ordered his men ashore, and they ran up the beach to the borg on a hill inland from the church. Swain's people saw this clearly, for it was on the verge of dusk while the light was still clear. They bent to the oars with all their strength, and the forecastle men leaped ashore not far behind the rearmost of Jarl Harald's folk.

Yet if it had not been for an unusual accident the pursuit must have had no immediate result. But it chanced that among Jarl Harald's men was one named Arni Rafn's son, who lost his courage completely as he heard Swain's men running after him. A few of the pursuers threw spears and launched arrows after the fugitives, and Arni Rafn's son, afraid lest he should be struck down as he ran, swung his shield across his back. It was a large shield, broader than himself, and when he came to the small door in the gate of the borg which stood open to admit him and his comrades, he forgot the shield entirely. As he flung himself at the door his shield caught fast in the jambs, and in the time required to pry it and him loose—for it hung by a heavy strap around his shoulders—Swain and Erlend came up, slew those unfortunates whom Arni had barred from entering the door and flung themselves upon him and the entrance.

Arni got free, more by luck than otherwise—and he might better have been dead, for men roared with laughter whenever he appeared, saying over the verse:

> Will Arni yield?
> Ask his shield!

But Swain and those with him almost carried the borg by the one stroke, and as it was, they took such a heavy toll of Jarl Harald's house-carls that he could not

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muster sufficient men to hold the walls once he had finally secured the open door.

Swain knew this, and he turned the approaching darkness to account, sending men to creep up to the palisades atop of the wall and fling in spears or shoot arrows or toss over heavy stones; and so he slew more of Jarl Harald's folk. And when he had drawn all of the garrison of the borg to the walls he commenced to throw torches upon the roofs of the buildings inside it. When the stables and a storehouse caught fire and Jarl Harald was compelled to employ most of his men to check the ravages of the flames, Swain promptly attacked again, climbing astride the palisade at one point himself and lopping the head off a man who strove to resist him.

But Jarl Harald left the flames to do their worst and undertook to repel the assault with a vigor which drew from Swain a grunt and the shout as he scrambled down the palisade:

"Well fought, Harald Maddad's son! With sense you would make a proper Jarl."

By this time Swain's and Erlend's men were more exhausted than those inside the borg, and the besiegers reluctantly suspended the attack until morning, setting a close guard about all the approaches to Jarl Harald's position. But in the morning the boendr began to arrive, some of them by boat from other islands and some from the interior of Hrossey, and they all protested against continuing the battle, as many of them had sons or brothers or relatives of one degree or another either with Swain or in the borg.

Erlend was very loath to hold back the resumption of the attack, and in this stand Swain supported him.

"All we have to do is to continue as we did yesterday," declared Swain; "and we shall be inside before midday."

"We shall be in at the first rush," insisted Erlend. "They could not hold us off."

"But what would it profit you if you did win in!" demanded one of the boendr.

"Erlend would be Jarl," returned Swain drily. "As for Harald—"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Yes, Jarl Harald would be dead," said a second bondi. "And so would be many others who are not Jarls, but whose relations in the islands would not forget it if their deaths were caused without reason."

"Without reason?" snarled Swain. "Your tongue wags too free. We slay to win for Erlend what the King has commanded Harald to give him."

"We all know how much that means," rejoined the bondi. "It is the sharpest sword that wins. But no victory is worth while which leaves anger and revenge in its wake. It is true that you seem to have the advantage over Jarl Harald. Let us see if we cannot reach a compromise with him. It is not necessary that you slay him, is it?"

"If he is not dead he will always beset me," growled Erlend.

But Swain was not willing to go so far.

"No," he said, "I do not desire Harald Maddad's son's death. Let him yield the islands to Erlend here, and——"

"But what of Jarl Rognvald?" spoke up a number of voices.

"Erlend will hold his share for him as Harald has done," replied Swain. "It is plainly to be seen that if Harald gives up his own share he cannot be permitted to retain Jarl Rognvald's."

This was generally admitted, and then Swain said:

"But I foresee trouble in one respect. I am content that Jarl Harald shall go free and leave the islands; but in the borg with him is one you know of, with whom I swear no truce."

The boendr understood that he meant Olvir Rosta. They answered him quickly and gave assurance that they would have no traffic with Olvir, and with this Swain was content. So four or five of the older men went up to the borg and held speech with Jarl Harald, who was very gloomy but firm in his terms.

"It is true that Swain and Erland can slay me if they wish," he admitted, "seeing that you who should aid me hold aloof. But I prefer to be dead than to yield dishonorably."

"Touching your claim that we hold aloof," replied the boendr, "it is not for us to intervene by force between two prominent men like you and Swain, and to say truth, Lord Jarl, you have not acted to make the people love you these last——"

"Make an end! Make an end!" rasped Jarl Harald. "What have you to say to me from Swain?"

"Nothing from Swain, Lord Jarl. We do not come from him, but on our own account, with his permission, to see if we can arrange a composition between you."

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"What?" barked Jarl Harald.

The boendr cleared their throats and looked uncomfortably at one another.

"Why," said the spokesman at last, "Swain will insist that you yield your share of the islands to Erlend Harald's son, who has a letter from King Eystein requiring you to do so."

"What else?"

"You—and all the Orkney-folk in your company who wish—to go from the islands unscathed."

Jarl Harald's bushy black eyebrows crawled down over his big nose.

"And what of Olvir Rosta?" he asked.

"He—he—is not of the Orkney-folk."

"Go back to Swain, and tell him I keep faith with my friends," he answered.

"What, Lord Jarl?" they quavered. "What do you mean?"

"I mean that Olvir Rosta is my friend. He has shared my fortune; I will share his."

Nothing they could say would shake him, and they returned sorrowfully with this message to where Swain and Erlend lounged just out of arrowshot of the borg. Swain heard them in frowning silence; but at the last stubborn refusal of Jarl Harald to yield Olvir, Erlend broke in:

"He has chosen his doom then. Let him taste of it. The sooner the better. We have wasted time since sunrise."

Swain shook his head.

"No, no, Erlend. By your leave, I will interfere in this. When all is said, I bred up Jarl Harald, and for what is good in him I propose to take credit. If he must be perverse and foolish in his choice of friends, still I prefer that he should stay by them in trouble as well as in prosperity. It is a quality I thought he had discarded, but there must be some good in the whelp yet. We will let Olvir go this time."

"It is you who are foolish," cried Erlend. "Do you think Olvir will feel gratitude for you—or Harald either?"

"I want no gratitude from any man," answered Swain gruffly. "And I tell you, you do not show good sense if you insist upon a borg-hewing. Every man you slay will be a source of a feud against you. Let them go and win a reputation for mercy and justice, and men will rally fast to you, and we shall have no ill-feelings to rise against us whenever the luck turns and we require quick service and friendly aid."

"If you are content I am," said Erlend. "Nevertheless I tell you, Swain, that the time comes when you will regret this."

But Swain refused to argue any longer, and the boendr acted as he bade them, returning to the borg with word for Jarl Harald that he and Olvir Rosta and all who chose to accompany him might go aboard a single longship and fare to the lands he owned in Caithness which were to be left to him.

"Does Swain guarantee our safety?" he demanded.

"Yes, Lord Jarl," replied the bondi who bore the message.

"I am satisfied," said Harald. "You can tell Swain that I will go. Also that I am young, and shall have my turn."

VI

JARL HARALD crossed over to his lands in Caithness again, with very few men accompanying him, and it seemed that his fortunes were at low ebb; but the Caithness-folk, who had practically driven him from their country a few days before, now pitied him in his adversity, and they received him amongst them with kindness and amity.

When he had gone Swain and Erlend called a Thing in Kirkiuvag, and at this meeting Erlend laid before the boendr the letter from King Eystein and assured them that he would be a good lord to all who dealt faithfully by him. Swain also spoke in his favor, and several other chiefs. And so the boendr made an agreement with him that they would recognize him as Jarl to rule all the islands until Jarl Rognvald returned from Jorsalaheim, when he was to render one-half to Rognvald; but if Jarl Rognvald perished then Erlend should continue Jarl of all the Orkneys.

Erlend was delighted with the easy way in which he had risen to such high estate, and at the beginning of his rule he was very friendly with Swain. But he had numerous cronies who had been cupmates when he lived in exile at Thorsa, who were jealous of Swain's power, and these labored ceaselessly to set him against Swain. Swain, however, regarded their intrigues with contempt.

"Do not concern yourself about this," he said to Erik and others of his supporters who approached him on the subject. "What they say is of no consequence. It was I

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who placed Erlend where he is, and he knows it."

Indeed Swain was more worried about Erlend's vigilance to meet a surprize attack from Jarl Harald than about his disposition to coldness, for Erlend's main thought now that he was Jarl was to carouse before a warm fire in his skalli, and he laughed scornfully at Swain's warnings. But Swain was deaf to mockery and derision, and he contrived to keep Erlend under arms until Yule-tide, when the weather became so boisterous that all agreed Harald need not be feared for the time being, and Swain departed to celebrate the feast upon his estate on Gairsey.

On the eleventh day of Yule Swain was sitting among his house-carls in his drinking-hall. According to his custom he drank little and said no more, occupying himself in listening to the conversation of others. Suddenly he was observed to lean forward, and rubbing his nose, he said to Erik, his forecastle man:

"I think Jarl Harald is now on his way to the islands."

The talk in the hall was stilled, and men looked at each other in astonishment.

"What do you mean, Swain?" answered Erik.

"I have a strong feeling that Harald is sailing to surprize us," replied Swain.

"Listen to the wind," said Erik. "No man would wish to put to sea in such weather."

"That is the reason why Harald would expect to surprize us," rejoined Swain.

"Are you fey?" challenged Erik.

"None less so. I know that I may be wrong, yet I have a feeling that we should get to our boats and go over to Kirkiuvag."

There was some grumbling, but upward of a hundred house-carls bound themselves and followed Swain into the night and the storm. They all crowded into a single longship and rowed through the Aurridafiord until they reached a cove not far from Kirkiuvag where they landed. Outside of Kirkiuvag they encountered men who were panting from hard running, and Swain hailed these men to stop

"Who are you?" replied the men, scuttling from the road.

Swain told them.

"This is the luckiest infall which has ever come to Jarl Erlend," one of the men answered. "He sent us to summon you from Gairsey, as he has just received tidings that Jarl Harald landed at Hafnarvag and is marching overland against him."

"I shall burn a candle in St. Magnus's Church—or perhaps slay a horse for Odin," remarked Swain. "My good luck is with me. Do you men continue on and rouse all the boendr you can reach."

He found when they entered Kirkiuvag that Erlend had withdrawn all his men to his ships and lay to off the beach. At first Erlend deemed Swain to be Harald and refused to land, but Swain went to him in a small boat, and after some discussion they arrived at a decision to march upon Jarl Harald, seeing that they mustered several hundred men adequately armed and, Swain argued also, might expect rather to surprize Harald by such a policy than to be surprized themselves.

In fact a party of men they sent ahead of them came upon a party of Jarl Harald's followers and killed two, with the result that the remainder fled, and the intelligence these conveyed to Harald inspired him to return to his ships, for he was not sanguine of success in a battle in which he would be outnumbered if he lacked the advantage of surprize. He was out of sight in a snowbank off Grimsey when Swain found the grooves made by his keels in the beach toward noon of the next day.

This event created a belief in some men's minds that Swain had more ability to foresee the future than others, although Swain himself denied that the foreboding he had experienced had come from within. Yet he was in no wise sorry that it had happened, because it inspired Jarl Erlend with caution and destroyed the confidence of Jarl Harald's men. The remainder of the Winter passed without incident, and when Spring came around Erlend sent for Swain to Kirkiuvag and spoke to him in this wise:

"I have been guided by you in my conduct up to this time, Swain, although it is true that I have not always agreed with what you said. But I can not remain sitting here at Kirkiuvag biding an attack from Harald or men will say I am niddering. Moreover I am under obligations to my friends and have been put to great expense in the expedition to recover my inheritance. Would it not be an honorable venture for us to go viking-faring in order to win fame

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and booty with which to reward those who have served us?"

"Yes, if we leave an ample force behind us," said Swain, "and do not go away too far or remain away too long."

They discussed the subject at length, and their conclusion was that Erik should be left to hold the islands with three longships and sufficient men, the boendr to be instructed to aid him whenever he required it, and to maintain signal-beacons at all points whence hostile ships might be observed approaching. And this being settled, *they* sailed in the week after Easter, following the east coats of Scotland south to Bretland* and Valland† for several months.

They won much booty, especially from one Knut the Wealthy, a merchant of Beruvik‡, as well as otherwhere; but this tale does not tell of what they did, seeing that the significance of the voyage lay not in the exploits they performed but in the opportunity it made for a sorry tragedy at Gairsey.

VII

WITH the coming of Spring Jarl Harald grew discontented with his lot in Caithness, where he dwelt in Lambaborg, a stronghold far south on the eastern coast which Swain Olaf's son had occupied once when he was an outlaw in his youth. He gave much thought to his plight, and it occurred to him that there reigned at that time two Kings in Norway, and if one espoused his enemy's cause perhaps the other would be equally willing to lend him aid.

Both Kings were sons of King Harald Gilli. Eystein, the elder, was the more powerful, but Ingi had been the offspring of a legitimate alliance and he was not without supporters, sufficient indeed to make it impossible for Eystein despite his strength to oust him altogether. Jarl Harald argued with reason that it would make his misfortune no harder if he was able to secure assistance from King Ingi, and if anything ever happened to King Eystein, his protector would become the unchallenged ruler of the North.

While he was considering this project a fleet of longships was sighted from the walls of Lambaborg sailing southward, and that evening the fisher-folk of the coast brought in the tidings that Swain and Erlend were aboard the fleet, embarked upon a wide-roving viking raid. Jarl Harald and Olvir Rosta, who was still with him, were tempted for the moment to regard this as an opportunity to regain the Orkneys, but Olvir was no man to walk blindly into a trap, and at his suggestion they sent off one of the fishing-boats to discover the situation in the islands.

A week later they learned of the dispositions which had been made by Swain to safeguard the islands, and Harald was obliged to confess that they must wait until they were stronger. This made him all the more inclined to the voyage to Norway, and Olvir did not dispute his inclinations. But Olvir had a plan maturing in his own mind of which he said nothing to Harald, albeit he did not scruple to make use of Harald unwittingly in putting it into effect.

"It seems a shame," he said, "that we should depart without striking a blow at our enemies to vindicate our honor. Men will say we were as helpless as women."

"What do you advise?" asked Jarl Harald. "We have only two longships, and no more than enough men to row them. We can not achieve much with this force."

"It is not my thought that we can seize the islands," replied Olvir. "But it may be that we can slay a few of Swain's people and pick up a little plunder."

"How?"

"Why, as we have heard, Swain has devised an elaborate system of beacons through all the islands. Let us circulate word ahead of our departure that we are contemplating a descent upon Hrossey. Then when we sail we will separate. You steer westward through Pentland Firth, being careful to keep within sight of the shore that men may see you and raise the alarm. I will steer north past Rognvaldsey and Kolbeinsey, and others will observe me. Between the two of us the men who guard the island will be bewildered, not knowing from which direction the blow will fall. In their confusion we should be able to do them harm as the opportunity arises."

Jarl Harald agreed to this plan, and they further arranged that they should meet again in the Hjaltlands* before heading east for Norway. They put out from Lambaborg in the late afternoon, planning

*Britain. †France. ‡Berwick-on-Tweed.

*Shetlands.

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to lie up for the night on the north coast of Caithness and continue their voyage in daylight within view of the Orkneys. But Olvir Rosta was careful to pull away in the morning very early before the sun was up, and he ran eastward entirely out of sight of land so that no man saw him; while Jarl Harald adhered to their plan and steered close under Sviney and Haey, where the watchers perceived him and set the beacons alight to carry intelligence of his coming.

Erik was at Kirkiuvag when the beacons carried the news of Jarl Harald's coming from Sviney by way of Flottey, Faerey and Kalfey to Orphir on the south coast of Hrossey and so across the big island to Kirkiuvag upon the north coast. He could tell by the flares that the danger was coming from the west, but to make certain he sailed through the Aurridafiord to Gairsey, reckoning that if there was also a threat from the east word would have reached there from Hjalpandisey and the outer islands, for Gairsey was almost central in the group and for this fact, as well as because of Swain's importance, it was usual for any man with tidings of interest to send them there to be relayed on as occasion served.

But at Gairsey he found only Asleif, with Swain's sons, Olaf and Andreas, children but a few Summers old, and a handful of ancient serving-men and house-carls. And she assured him there had been no talk of invaders from any direction.

"Nevertheless," answered Erik, walking down to the strand with her, the children gamboling ahead, "I do not like to leave you so unguarded, Lady. These are ill times."

"Ill times or good times," returned Asleif tranquilly, "we are not the only folk in the islands to be cared for, and you must move whichever way the enemy comes from."

"If indeed he comes at all," grumbled Erik. "These beacon-watchers may take a whale for a longship in their cups."

"We shall be safe here," said Asleif. "No raider has ever penetrated to Gairsey when the Jarl's longships were at sea."

Erik knew this for truth, and he turned the prows of his ships westward in better heart. He ran out through the Efjusund to the open sea; then steered south along the coast of Hrossey, maintaining a mast-head lookout for Jarl Harald. Some miles north of Straumsness Jarl Harald's craft crawled over the horizon, but at sight of the odds against him the young Jarl turned west and pulled desperately for the wastes of the Atlantic.

All the rest of that day the chase continued with varying luck, but in the night Jarl Harald doubled on his tracks, traversed Erik's fleet and plied north again, anxious only to encircle the Orkneys and gain the shelter of the Hjaltlands. In the morning Erik saw the empty ocean, guessed the trick which had been played upon him and turned to continue the pursuit—too late. Off Skebrohead in Hrolfsey he heard news from a fisherman which sent him plunging back with smoking oarholes to Gairsey—again too late. Olvir Rosta had struck his blow and escaped.

This was what had happened, as the story was pieced together from the survivors of the raid and the boendr and their servants who rallied to drive Olvir off:

During the night after he left Caithness Olvir pulled west, entering the inner island waters between Austreker and the Muli of Dyrness unseen by any one. He rounded the point of Oja on Hjalpandisey before sunrise, and the waking servants in Swain's stead on Gairsey heard the crunch of the gravel under his keel as he landed. Several ran to meet him, thinking that Erik had returned. Their screams as Olvir's house-carls speared them roused others, and one of the bower-maidens staggered into Asleif's chamber, ashen-faced with fear:

"Raiders in the steading! We shall all be slain."

Asleif rose without a word and snatched up the two children from their beds in an adjoining room.

"But they are all around us," cried the poor girl. "It is too late to fly."

"Be quiet, girl," rebuked the old woman sternly. "Jarl Harald does not slay ——"

A shout of command, deep, resonant, sinisterly triumphant, rose above the medley of shrieks and imprecations.

"That is not Jarl Harald!" she exclaimed.

And she ran across the great hall and the anteroom of the skalli to the entrance-door. The gray dawnlight was over the steading. She could see the outlines of the buildings, the long shape of a dragon on the beach below the hill, the men who ran hither and thither, several boats pulling madly for Hrossey and Hrolfsey—and foremost in the rush of armored figures one with immensely broad shoulders, long-armed, squat in build,

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whose mailcoat was covered by a beard as black as midnight.

"Olvir Rosta," she murmured.

There was no fear in her voice, no panic in her manner. She called to the girl behind her, not urgently but as if time were of no matter.

"Out the back way. Raise the fisherfolk on Aurridaside."

"But they——"

"Run, girl! You can slip through—between the south barn and the grainery."

The girl sped light-footed down the dirt-floored hall, thankful for the dubious hope of life held out to her. Asleif watched her into the kitchens, glanced swiftly around to make sure no one else was by, then ran to the high-piled ale-barrels that were mingled with broken benches and chests of weapons in the skalli's anteroom. She carried a child under each arm, tow-headed, thick-limbed little Norsemen, whose sober blue eyes blinked interestedly at this exciting variety in their daily routine. They had not once whimpered since their grandmother awaked them.

Asleif set them down upon the floor to scrabble in the rubbish, and crawled over a tier of headed barrels ready for use. Behind them she discovered several empty ones as she had expected. She climbed down to the floor once more, moving with remarkable agility for her years, and picked up the children one at a time, carried them across the tier of headed barrels and lowered them gently into the innermost empty one.

"Not a sound," she commanded them. "Be quiet there until Erik comes for you."

Then she tossed handfuls of dust over the barrels and heaped the wreckage of a couch upon them. An old sail, mildewed and torn, she artfully arranged to suggest a natural purpose for its being there.

This done, she flew into the hall, took her accustomed seat on the woman's cross-bench as if nothing untoward were happening and started her spinning-wheel awhirring. She was busy at work when heavy footsteps thumped in the anteroom and gruff voices sounded; and she kept the treadle clacking as Olvir Rosta, big and black and evilly magnificent, strode in with bloodied sword in hand and frowned at her from the threshold.

"Who is here?" he rumbled. "Ho, you, old beldame! Well met!"

She rose to face him, and when she stood erect her head was above his, for she was very tall for a woman, as he was short for a man.

"Swain is from home, as I make sure you know," she answered scornfully. "It is not your way to meet him face to face."

"I have met him," retorted Olvir; "but he was lucky—more so than his brothers and your man, Olaf. The last time it will be a different story."

Asleif smiled proudly.

"You may have met him, but you never stood before him, Olvir," she jibed. "Nor will you ever."

"How do you know?" he sneered. "You will not be alive to observe his end. But I am concerned with blood not words. Where are the two brats, his sons?"

Asleif mustered a smile of triumph.

"You have no sons to avenge you, Olvir. How unfortunate!"

Olvir bent toward her, his teeth showing white against the black mesh of his beard.

"Will you mock me, Asleif? Then pray to your gods! For your death will be pitiful as that of your servants. See! I will show you."

And he bade his followers drag in one of the serving-men of the skalli and fling him stripped upon his stomach on the earthen floor.

"Where are Swain's sons?" demanded Olvir.

"How should I know?" chattered the man. "They were here."

"But now?"

"How should I—No! No! For Christ's sake! Oh, God, have mercy——"

For at a sign from Olvir a big house-carl took his dagger and carved the blood-eagle of the Norse on the serving-man's quivering, naked back, four others holding him motionless the while.

"Where are Swain's sons?" repeated Olvir.

"I know not! They were here, but I know not——"

Olvir looked at Asleif.

"This man has suffered much," he remarked. "He can suffer more."

Her eyes alone conveyed the contempt of her answer. To the tortured man on the floor she said soothingly:

"Death comes to all, Thorkil. Be brave!"

"But I know not!" screamed Thorkil. "I only saw——"

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His screams became groans of unhuman agony as the house-carl with the dagger deftly detached several of the ribs from his backbone. His cries dropped in a shrill scale of anguish as the tormentor made an incision, reached in a ruddied hand and commenced to tear out his victim's lungs. A last choking wail, and Thorkil was dead.

"Where are Swain's sons?" asked Olvir a third time.

"Safe," said Asleif.

She forced a light of victory to flood her worn face.

"Did you think to frighten me?" she laughed harshly. "I am the widow of a warrior, the mother of sons who never knew fear. My years have been spent in turmoil and suffering. Always death has ridden beside me. Always pain has been at my elbow. What can you do to frighten me, Olvir Rosta? Death, soon or late, is only death—and what have I to fear from death?"

She raised her arms in a gesture which cowed the brutish warrior faces around her.

"To heaven or hell or Vallhalla, whereever my men have gone, there would I go!"

Olvir turned to his house-carls.

"Search!" he shouted. "Every chamber and cranny."

"We have searched everywhere," answered one. "There is nothing save plunder for the taking."

A thud came from the anteroom.

"What is that?" cried Olvir.

A house-carl appeared in the doorway, waving a brimming horn.

"Ale, Olvir, well-brewed. Rare stuff! We are thirsty."

"You will be drunk," scowled Olvir. "Take care you be not trapped."

He seized Asleif by the gray locks of her hair.

"May Odin blast you, old hag!" he muttered. "What have you done with those cubs?"

She contrived to smile again.

"Hrossey," she panted, choking as his fingers gripped her neck. "Soon—all—island—will—come—and—you ——"

A man ran in the door.

"Ho, Olvir," he shouted. "Three ten-oared barges are rowing from Hrolfsey. We can see boats shoving off from Hrossey too; and there are folk streaming over the Gairsey hills."

Olvir hesitated, frowning.

"We have done what we may," he decided. "Well, Asleif, have you anything to say in parting?"

Her eyes met his unflinchingly.

"Swain will say it for me," she said.

Olvir growled a curse and shoved her from him. Up went his sword—flash! And the gray head of Asleif spun across the skalli floor. Erik found it hours afterward lying against the wall of the anteroom, lips parted in a mocking smile.

"So he slew her in here," he said. "May the foul fiend gnaw his bowels! But have none of you learned anything of the children?"

The boendr and servants who clustered at his back all denied knowledge of Swain's sons.

"He might have carried them off to wreak his revenge at leisure," reasoned Erik aloud, "seeing he was too hurried even to burn the skalli."

But one of the old house-carls of the steading, who had lain wounded in a ditch and watched the invaders depart, insisted they could not have taken the children with them.

"And the last seen of them," spoke up another, "they were with their grandmother."

Erik stared down reflectively upon the severed head beside the wall.

"She had no fear for them," he commented. "She would never have died with that look on her face if she had. What's that?"

He stooped, listening. Several men laughed, inquiring what he meant. There were many noises outside, for hundreds had gathered at the wrecked steading. But Erik motioned for silence and stooped closer to the wall. Yes, he heard something, a faint, subdued chirping, as of little animals under cover; but in this case he was sure he discerned the plaintive tones of children's voices, children very tired and thirsty and hungry.

He sprang up, ploughed his way through those behind him and ran into the anteroom.

"Olaf! Andreas!" he called.

There was no mistaking the answer which came to him, partly a wail of protest, partly a chant of relief; and he scrambled over the headed ale-barrels to drag them out of Asleif's cast.

"Why did you not call for some one, younglings?" he exclaimed, almost in anger.

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They rubbed sleepy eyes.

"It was our grandmother," said Olaf.

"She bade us wait for you, Erik," said Andreas.

"And say nothing until you came," added Olaf.

Erik, Iceland pagan-Christian that he was, made the sign of the Cross upon his chest and then signed the Hammer above it.

"May the valkyries hail her, that old one!" he said piously. "There should be cross-benches in Valhalla."

VIII

ERIK gave chase to Olvir and had no difficulty in divining the course the raider would sail; but when the pursuers reached the Hjaltlands they heard that Olvir had united his forces with Jarl Harald's and the two had gone east in company with a fleet of Danish merchants, who were friends of Olvir. Under the circumstances Erik decided it was not advisable for him to continue after Olvir, inasmuch as he would probably be greatly outnumbered and if anything happened to his ships the islands would be left entirely unprotected. So he turned his prows homeward, saying frankly to his men:

"We have gained little merit from this enterprise, and if I were Swain I should use hard words against us although it is true that we have had singularly bad luck."

He would have felt happier if he had known at that time that Jarl Harald refused to have anything more to do with Olvir Rosta after he heard from Olvir's men how Asleif had been slain. When the two allies first cast up accounts on their coming together at Hafnarvag in Jala of the Hjaltlands Olvir said only that he had encountered currents which had carried him eastward into the ocean and that he had then ventured into the islands and wrought some damage at Swain's steading in Gairsey, slaying a number of people who had resisted him. He also made fair division with Harald of the plunder his men had taken.

But afterward, as has been said, Olvir Rosta's men talked with Jarl Harald's in their cups, and when the longships beached at Bjorgvin Harald went to Olvir and demanded a further accounting of him.

"It is true that I slew Asleif," Olvir admitted straightway. "She would not tell me what I sought to know."

"Where Swain's children were hidden," said Harald scornfully. "What manner of warrior are you who slay women and children?"

"My courage has never been called into dispute," returned Olvir. "I have fought more years than you have lived."

"I am aware that you are noted as a warrior," answered Jarl Harald. "But I think you are not the kind of warrior with whom I care to unite myself. To be sure, I am a Jarl without territories sufficient to support my title, yet I have pride in my name, and my honor so far is clean of such stains as you soil yourself with."

"This is a matter concerning which men think differently," said Olvir. "It is to be remembered that Swain slew my grandmother."

"Ah, but Frakork was a witch, as was well known to all men," retorted Harald. "She slew Erlend's father and bewitched many in her day. I have heard Swain tell of the spells she used on him."

"She was a woman," replied Olvir, "and my grandmother."

"Did Asleif use sword or spear against you?" asked Harald.

"No."

"Did you ever know Swain to slay a child?"

"I slew no child."

"Because you might not find them. No, I say to you plainly, Olvir, you have done ill to take advantage of my friendship and good faith to exploit your private feud, for no matter what the priests and the Orkney-folk say about your slaying of Asleif it will confer no credit upon me that I aided you, whether I knew it or not."

Olvir Rosta shrugged his shoulders.

"Have it your own way," he said. "You are oversqueamish for your own good."

"Say rather I am jealous for my reputation, that I may recover what I have lost," returned Jarl Harald. "What inn do you propose to lodge at?"

Olvir told him, and Harald then answered that he would go to another; and that was the last intercourse they ever had with each other. Olvir went off and joined himself to King Eystein in Hordaland, and presently Jarl Harald sought King Ingi and made suit with him for assistance to recover his dominions. In later days the manner of Jarl Harald's parting from Olvir Rosta became known in the Orkneys, but until that time

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men said many harsh things about Jarl Harald, who was supposed to have participated wittingly in Olvir's plans.

In the islands the remainder of the Summer passed without trouble, and Autumn was at hand when Swain and Jarl Erlend returned from their viking cruise, the longships deep in the water with their burden of rich spoil. Erik went to meet Swain at Kirkiuvag as soon as he had heard the fleet was in, and he said afterward that it was the most difficult day of his life and the one in which he had known most fear.

Swain was sitting in the Jarl's great hall at the high table when Erik entered. He had been told by others of Asleif's death, but his manner was impassive as he took Erik's hand. The little Icelander's leather face was dribbling with moisture.

"Asleif—" he began, and stopped, gulping.

"I know of it," said Swain.

"We were tricked."

"That is to be seen," replied Swain.

"I—I did what I could."

"I am sure that you would, Erik," said Swain kindly. "I am the first to say that Olvir Rosta is no ordinary warrior. He would not have escaped me all these years had he been. But I call upon all men to notice that as soon as the islands are settled quietly I will go in search of him and his friend, Jarl Harald, who has repaid me for all my kindness in this wise, and I will flay both of them alive on the seabeach and leave them for crabs to eat."

Men said this was well-spoken, and Erik told Swain that his life was Swain's henceforth.

IX

IN THIS Summer Jarl Rognvald returned from Jorsalaheim and Mikligard to Norway. He sold his ships at Dyraksborg* in Bolgaraland,† whence he and his following went to Pull‡ in Italy. Here they purchased horses and rode to Romaborg,** where they had speech with the Pope and other great persons; and after this they rode as the fortune of the road permitted northward through Valland and other countries to Denmark, where they took ship for Norway and came at last to King Eystein in Hordaland. They had much praise from all men on the score of their exploits, and for the first time Jarl Rognvald heard of what had happened in the Orkneys during his absence. Inasmuch as a considerable part of the stories told him had been colored by Olvir Rosta he was given a very unfavorable view of Swain's part in the struggle with Jarl Harald.

"I always considered Swain my friend," said Jarl Rognvald; "but it appears that he took advantage of my absence to upset the people for his own profit. He has grown to be so powerful that no Jarl can feel safe with him for subject."

And then Jarl Rognvald, who was very fond of poetry and music, made some verses which he sang for the King and other nobles:

> Though the most part of my nobles
> Have forgot the oaths they sware me
> (Such the wickedness of men is),
> Yet will their designs be thwarted.
> Traitors plotting in my absence
> Will not by it grow more loyal;
> Slow but sure shall be my motto
> While a beard on chin I carry.

Many Lendermen* were anxious to entertain Jarl Rognvald, and he was unable to refuse them without discourtesy, so that it was already the beginning of Winter before he could sail for the Orkneys. As he had no ships of his own with him, and certain new ones his friends and relatives had offered to build him were not yet completed, he was obliged to take passage in the vessel of an Iceland merchant who conveyed him to Torfness* in Scotland, and from there they journeyed to Orphir in Hrossey, where the Jarl had his steading.

This was a few days before Yule, and the following morning a messenger came from Swain at Kirkiuvag asking Jarl Rognvald if he returned at peace with Swain and Erlend.

"Say to Swain," Jarl Rognvald replied to the messenger, "that it is for me to ask him if he receives me in peace, for it is not I who have done things to make trouble between men where no trouble existed before, nor have I set faction against faction."

Erlend, who having tasted supreme power was not of a mind to relinquish it, seized upon the Jarl's answer as an excuse for refusing to render to him a half of the islands.

"It is plain," argued Erlend, "that Jarl Rognvald takes the side of Harald and our enemies, for his tone is such that he evidently regards you as disloyal and me as an usurper."

*Durazzo. †Bulgaria. ‡Apulia. **Rome.

*Barons. †Tarlatness.

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"I do not agree with you," said Swain. "It is possible that he has heard evil tales about us, but that is no reason for us to refuse him what is really his own."

"A man's own is what he is able to keep," said Erlend.

"True," admitted Swain. "And I advise you to consider that you made an agreement with the boendr to hold Jarl Rognvald's half of the islands in trust for him. If you refuse to restore his property upon his demand you may very well raise all the boendr against yourself, and in that case I fancy you will find your maxim can work two ways."

"That was long ago," grumbled Erlend; "and I did not suppose that Jarl Rognvald would join our enemies."

"It is for us to see that he does not join our enemies," replied Swain. "Leave it to me, and I will arrange matters with him."

This day was the third before Yule, and Swain mounted a horse and rode by his lone through Knarrarstead to Orphir. It was candle-lighting time when he arrived, and none of the Jarl's servants in the stead yard recognized him. He walked unannounced into the hall of the skalli where Jarl Rognvald sat at the high table with a number of friends who were come to greet him.

"It is a good day that you return safe from Jorsala-faring, Lord Jarl," said Swain.

Jarl Rognvald regarded him with some surprize.

"You are bold to trust yourself in my hands, Swain, after all the harm you have wrought," he said.

"It is not I who have wrought harm," rejoined Swain. "You, who know me better than most, should be aware of that."

"Nevertheless I have heard ill tales about you," answered the Jarl. "I consider it was unfriendly of you to permit the islands to be set at war while I was on a holy errand for the benefit of my soul and in the service of the Lord Christ and His Mother."

"Touching your errand, it is not for me to say whether it was holy or not," returned Swain curtly. He was chafing under the coldness of the Jarl's manner. "But I call upon you to remember that I urged you not to go and gave you full warning that trouble would ensue."

Jarl Rognvald's face became crimson with anger.

"So you prepared an excuse in advance!" he roared. "Yes, you are long-headed, Swain; but if it was clever, I say to you also it was not loyal."

"Loyal or not," said Swain, "I have been at pains to save your property for you, and I say to you that you did not deserve it, for you thought more of your soul's weal and the satisfaction of hearing skalds recite your exploits than of the welfare of your people."

The Jarl leaped to his feet.

"Your success has gone to your head," he shouted. "This is no way to speak to me, Swain. I am Jarl!"

"If you are Jarl you are also man," retorted Swain. "And I am too old to learn to speak differently to a Jarl simply because he is a Jarl. You have not shown good sense, and that is the bare truth. The troubles we have had here would never have occurred if you had been guided by me and remained at home where you belonged."

Jarl Rognvald would have called his house-carls to seize Swain at this, but the boendr who had been drinking with him intervened and came between them. There was a great deal of heated talk, and at last Jarl Rognvald said that he would suffer Swain to go free, but that he would not give him friendship.

"Very well," said Swain. "It shall be as you say, but I call all men here to witness that I have been at pains from the start of the troubles in the islands to protect your rights.

"Is it not so?" he demanded of the boendr in the hall.

They admitted that it was.

"And I call you all to witness as well that I came here to banish misgivings from the Jarl's mind," Swain continued. "Let it be considered, if more trouble occurs, that Jarl Erlend and I endeavored to establish peace with Jarl Rognvald."

He would have left the skalli at this, but again the boendr intervened and so worked upon Jarl Rognvald's mind that he requested Swain, albeit sullenly, to remain and fulfil his errand. And at Swain's suggestion the Jarl dispatched messengers for more of his friends, and they debated the situation most of that night and into the next day, with the result that Jarl Rognvald agreed to go to Kirkiuvag and swear a peace with Erlend.

They went that afternoon, coming to Kirkiuvag on the second night before Yule; and Erlend received Jarl Rognvald kindly, which was more than could be said for Jarl

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Rognvald's attitude. He accepted the situation because his friends persuaded him that he would only create worse trouble if he did not, but he was actually no less resentful against Swain and Erlend than he had been when he first heard the news of their driving Harald forth from the islands. Men said this was due to his belief that if any mischance befell Jarl Harald, he, Rognvald, should possess all the islands, as he had indeed before Harald was made Jarl with him through Swain's influence. But however this was and whatever his reasons he showed a sour face to both Erlend and Swain and took the oath of peace with a very ill grace.

The terms of their treaty were that Rognvald was to have all the property which had been his before he sailed Jorsala-faring and that Erlend should have Harald's share, that each should defend the other against Jarl Harald if he sought to attack either of them, and that they and their friends should dwell in peace and amity.

There was vast relief in all parts of the islands when their agreement was made known. For the first time in several years the Orkney-folk celebrated the Yule feast with unreserved joy, and none of the chiefs was obliged to spend the Winter in his longship, watching for a possible foe. Men said it was like old times and that they need fear no more fighting and raiding; but Swain knew better. Jarl Harald's disposition was as open to him as his own, and he was convinced the young Jarl would not so easily accept defeat. Likewise he did not trust Jarl Rognvald, whose mind had been poisoned too bitterly to enable him to weigh justly what had occurred.

"For the Winter we are safe," he told Erik. "In the Spring hate will bubble again, and we shall hear sword-music."

X

THE one man in the islands who enjoyed himself thoroughly that Winter was Jarl Erlend. He refused to worry about the future and indulged himself in ale-drinking and mead-quaffing as much as he desired, keeping always a court of kindred spirits around him at Kirkiuvag. Swain offered no remonstrances at this time for two reasons. The first was that he had said much on the subject in past months and did not desire to create an open breach between himself and Erlend in the vexed state of their relations with Jarl Rognvald. The second was that he believed them safe until the conclusion of the Spring gales.

But an unfortunate feature of Erlend's continual drinking was that it served to prejudice Jarl Rognvald all the more against him. Rognvald declared openly to his friends that no good could come to the Orkneys while any part of them was ruled by a man who was a sot and the creature of an adventurer like Swain; and when some of the boendr undertook to acquaint him with Jarl Harald's misdeeds which had been the cause of the young Jarl's overthrow he replied that if Swain had cared to exert his influence properly Jarl Harald would never have taken the bit in his teeth.

"No, no," he said. "I know Swain of old. Once before he brought about the fall of Jarl Paul in order that I might become Jarl, and I have always been the first man to give him due credit for his aid in that business. But he was not content to enjoy his power moderately. Afterward he arranged matters so that I was obliged to accept Jarl Harald to share the islands with me, and although I considered that was for the best interests of all I could not forget that it was Swain's doing. Nor could he. You may depend upon it he has decided to supplant all of us or else to secure a condition which will make him the real ruler, no matter who holds the title of Jarl. Jarl-maker is the title he craves."

And this was the manner in which Swain came by the nickname he bore all the rest of his life. Bestowed in derision it became a title of honor.

In the Spring Erik came to Swain one day as the men were engaged with the planting.

"Here is viking-faring weather," said the Icelander. "We can put five longships into the water. How if we go east to Norway and make trial to catch Olvir Rosta?"

Swain shook his head.

"No, Erik, that affair must wait."

"All goes well here," returned Erik. "As for Jarl Harald, it may chance that we meet him upon the voyage or else secure an opportunity to exchange blows with him in the east. At all events Erlend and Rognvald should be able to defend their lands without us."

"If they held together, yes," said Swain.

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"But I do not consider I should act honorably if I left Erlend at this time."

"You have done much for Erlend," argued Erik. "You can not always nurse him."

"There is reason in what you say," admitted Swain. "Yet I owe protection to all the Orkney-folk who are my friends, and reflection will convince you that we should not profit if by accident Jarl Harald were allowed to reestablish himself."

The next day Swain went to Kirkiuvag, where Jarl Erlend was engaged in a drink-bout with a man from the Sudreyar who had bet two gold armlets that he could outlast the Jarl. Erlend and all his guests were very drunk when Swain entered the Skalli, and Erlend called out to him:

"Go away, Swain! You are forever coming to interrupt me in my pleasures. Sometimes I wish you had never visited me at Thorsa, for since then you have made me lose more opportunities to enjoy good comradeship than in my whole life before."

Swain laughed—but there was a harsh note in his laughter which pierced Erlend's drink-addled brain.

"Better that I interrupt you than Jarl Harald," he answered. "If you do not have a care you will be slain in your cups, and that would be a great pity and shame, for you are a brave man and have attained high rank."

He said the last words with a significance which Erlend did not miss, and the Jarl excused himself from his guests, staggered down from the high table and walked with Swain into a private chamber. Here he turned upon Swain with some temper.

"I do not accept it in good part that you should publicly remind me I owe my position to you," he mumbled. "You take too much upon yourself."

"You speak like Jarl Rognvald," returned Swain, grimly humorous. "What I take upon myself is the duty of protecting you in your good fortune. Will you have me leave you and seek safety elsewhere?"

Erlend cast himself into a chair, for his feet were very unsteady.

"You know I would not," he answered angrily. "Rognvald is no friend to me, and without you I am lost."

"And you wax indignant because I seek to restrain your drinking within bounds which will permit you to wield a sword!"

"There is no danger," protested Erlend.

"If there were it would be a different matter."

"I say there is danger," replied Swain. "I say the danger is great, and that if we do not act promptly to avert it, both you and I may become headless corpses."

"As how?"

"Thus. The Spring gales are blowing themselves out. Presently we shall have Jarl Harald with us again, and I would make our dispositions so that we could strangle his attempt before it is fairly launched. Let him once get into the islands, where he still has friends, let him and his sympathizers make play with Jarl Rognvald, and there is no knowing but that they will join forces against us. And that will mean we must receive outlawry or do all over again what we have already done."

A wicked light blazed up in Erlend's drink-reddened eyes.

"Let us take our house-carls this night and fare across Hrossey to Orphir and dispose of Rognvald, once and for all," he proposed.

Swain checked him with a single look.

"No, Erlend. Rognvald does not know the truth about me—or will not, which is the same thing—but we have been good friends in bygone times, and I will not take the first step to destroy him."

"But you say he is likely to show treachery to you!"

"Let him do it. Then we will talk of slaying him. But even so, I should hold my hand if I could."

Erlend swayed erect, frowning.

"You talk like a green maiden, Swain," he growled. "We are men with lives and fortunes at stake. Shall we gamble them away to satisfy a friendship of yours which is entirely one-sided?"

Swain crossed the room to his side, took him by the arm and led him, savagely glowering, to a couch.

"Lie there and sleep it off," said Swain sternly. "And remember, Erlend, I am no man to prate of what I have done, but you are the first to brand me womanish. Must I hew a hole in your head to let in sense enough to acquaint you that I have an affection for Jarl Rognvald despite his bitterness against me? He is wrong, and the day will come when he will realize it."

"If you are his friend I see not how you can also be my friend when he regards me as an enemy," scowled Erlend.

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"And no less does he regard me as an enemy," replied Swain. "That is a matter we must trust to time to mend."

"And be betrayed the while we wait!"

"Not if we practise sufficient vigilance. I came here to secure your company on a visit to Orphir to discuss with Rognvald our dispositions for meeting Harald. But we can not start until you are sober, and I suggest that you endeavor to secure a hold upon yourself overnight. I will take care of your friends."

Erlend was cowed, and he promised to drink no more that day; and his friends, when Swain went to them, after some grumbling agreed likewise to leave the ale-barrels alone so that they might be in condition to accompany Erlend on the morrow. And Swain, with this accomplished, dispatched a messenger to Jarl Rognvald to give him warning of their coming.

To say truth, Jarl Rognvald received them none too courteously and made a considerable showing of armed house-carls, as if in indication that he was not disposed to trust them. Swain observed this as they entered the skalli at Orphir, and he gestured with his thumb at the men standing around the walls of the hall.

"I see that you are all ready for Jarl Harald," he remarked. "It is to discuss this that we have visited you."

"I am ready for whatever happens," returned Jarl Rognvald gruffly. "I am never taken unawares, Swain, when I am present on my property."

He had not finished speaking when there was an uproar of hostile shouting and the clashing of weapons in the stead yard outside.

"And it seems I am well-advised in that respect," he added, waving to his attendants to seize Swain and Erlend. "I suspect your plot has gone wrong, for if I am surrounded here, nevertheless I shall hold you two as security for my safety."

"No, no, Lord Jarl," cried Swain. "There has been a mistake."

"More likely it is his people who undertake to trap us," snarled Erlend.

But Swain bade him be quiet and went on:

"Do you think one as war-wise as I would thrust his head into a trap like this? Lord Jarl, if Erlend and I intended harm we should not have entered your skalli unattended."

"There is sense in that," Jarl Rognvald conceded.

"This bicker outside is the natural result of our misunderstandings," urged Swain. "The thing for us to do is to quell it before it runs too far."

"I am with you there," assented Jarl Rognvald.

He ordered his house-carls to stand back, and he and Swain and Erlend rushed out into the yard, where Erlend's friends had become embroiled with Rognvald's following. Several men had been slain when the two Jarls and Swain appeared upon the scene, and it was only by the greatest exertions that they succeeded in forcing the hostile parties apart.

When this had been accomplished Swain suggested that they shut Erlend's men in a rick-yard at one side; and then Erlend demanded that they take steps to discover who had started the fighting. Jarl Rognvald agreed without any friendliness, but he was obliged to acquit his visitors of blame for the fray, for it appeared from the testimony of both sides that the trouble had been started by the jeers of Jarl Rognvald's men addressed to those of Jarl Erlend's train who showed most clearly the effects of the drinking-bout which Swain had terminated.

"So be it," said Jarl Rognvald. "My men were in the wrong. We will balance the scath and the killings, and I will pay manbote for whatever is due your folk, Erlend. But—" and he glowered at both Swain and Erlend—"although under the law my men were guilty, the trouble would never have occurred if you lived properly at Kirkiuvag."

"It is not my habit to regulate your method of living at Orphir," replied Erlend haughtily.

"It is not necessary that you should," Jarl Rognvald retorted. "We have our ale-drinkings at Orphir, but they do not continue from one week to the next. It is an ill thing, Erlend, for a Jarl to set the example to the common folk that you do."

Erlend clapped his hand to his sword.

"I did not come here to be insulted after having my men slain," he said. "If that is the way you feel we will leave you to make shift as you can."

But Swain intervened again, for he was not disposed to allow the two Jarls to break with one another, more especially because

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he knew the one who would suffer most by such an event would be Erlend.

"Peace, peace," he cried to them. "I remind the twain of you that we have other folk to think of than ourselves. There will be much suffering if there is continued fighting in the islands this Summer. It is for us to concert matters so that peace is secured."

"'Us,' 'us!'" mimicked Jarl Rognvald. "Since when did you become Jarl, Swain?"

Swain turned to him slowly.

"I will support from you what I would not tolerate from another man, Lord Jarl," he answered. "But I ask you to consult your own memory as to the way in which I have employed such power as has come to me. It is true I am a mere boendr and you two are Jarls; but it is also true that you two at this moment are interested in quarreling with each other, while I am for protecting the islands."

"That sounds very well," sneered Jarl Rognvald. "But some might say you were interested in securing the great power you have come to possess."

"And in that I am no different from you Jarls," returned Swain. "But we have talked enough. Do you answer me this question: will you join with Erlend and me to beat off Harald's attack when it comes?"

"Why are you so sure that Harald will attack us?" inquired Jarl Rognvald.

"You know him as well as I do," said Swain. "Do you think it is in his nature to accept defeat as long as he can steer a longship?"

"No," agreed Jarl Rognvald. "You are in the right. But what will you have me do?"

And then, before Swain or Erlend could speak, he went on: "It would not suit me to fight in company with you, because I am not disposed to trust either of you."

Erlend bowed mockingly.

"We thank you for the warning, Rognvald," he said. "After the deaths of my men in your stead yard it comes honorably from you."

Jarl Rognvald colored, for he was above all things a man who prized honor, and he took deeply to heart his men's breach of the peace. But Swain intervened again to prevent the savage answer that was on his tongue.

"There is no need for us to operate together," said Swain hastily. "In fact, as I see what is in front of us, it will be necessary for us to work separately in two fleets."

"How is that?" asked Jarl Rognvald.

"Why, if Jarl Harald comes he will go first to Thorsa in Caithness, where he has many friends, unless he is driven contrary by winds. One of us should watch for him in Thorsa; the other fleet should bide in the Hjaltlands, seeking to intercept him if possible, or failing that to cut off his retreat should he reach the Orkneys. In this way we would have him between two shields as it were, and it will go hard with us if we do not crush him."

Jarl Rognvald accepted this plan after some debate, and it was decided that he should go to Thorsa, while Jarl Erlend and Swain, as soon as they could float their longships and embark crews, should sail to the Hjaltlands and remain there until Jarl Harald was heard from one way or another. It was noted by men who were present at their council that Jarl Rognvald parted with Jarl Erlend and Swain without handfasting them.

XI

SWAIN and Jarl Erlend sailed north with fifteen ships including barges and transports, and they made their principal resort in the Hjaltlands the isle of Mosey, which is far southward in the group and possesses a strong borg that was built by the Old People. The longships bided here, but the small craft were constantly plying back and forth throughout the islands keeping watch and ward, and among other things enforcing an order Jarl Erlend made that no ships should be allowed to sail to Norway. For he and Swain were hopeful that Jarl Harald might blunder into their fleet unknowingly, and in that case they made certain of capturing him. But this was not to be, and the sole consequence of their measures was to turn many people against them, because men said they assumed too arbitrary powers.

What happened was largely influenced by luck, in this wise:

Jarl Harald made considerable progress in his suit with King Ingi in Norway. Ingi needed friends badly, and he was disposed to accept any alliance. Moreover the fact that his half-brother, King Eystein, supported Jarl Erlend disposed him to favor Jarl Harald. The end of it all was

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that he gave Jarl Harald four longships, and friends and relatives of the young Jarl outfitted him two more. There was no lack of men to go in these vessels, for Jarl Harald promised lands and fortunes to those who aided him providing he should recover his dominions. And so, with seven times the force with which he had fled east, Jarl Harald set sail for the Orkneys again on a day well past the middle of Summer.

It was his purpose to sail first to the Hjaltlands as Swain had expected he would, for he reckoned there to discover the state of opinion in the Orkneys and perhaps augment his force somewhat from such sympathizers as he had at home. But, as it chanced, that mid-summer was marked by the breaking of a series of tempests such as the oldest of the island-folk could not remember to have experienced at that season before. Jarl Harald's fleet was caught in one of the most severe of these tempests, and while three of his ships were able to beat up for the Hjaltlands, his own dragon and three others were blown southwest out of their course and finally made a harbor in Strionsey, very much battered and weather-worn.

Swain and Erlend had been harbor-bound by this same storm, but they heard immediately of the arrival at Hvalsey, to the north of Mosey, of three strange longships from Norway, and they seized them without difficulty. From the Norse crews they learned of Jarl Harald's plans and made certain that as the young Jarl had not reached the Hjaltlands he either had found a refuge in the Orkneys or was perished in Rann's Bath. Their course was plain, and they promptly headed south, leaving their prisoners and the captured longships to the care of their friends on Meignland.

But luck stepped in again. In the Dynrost*, the open sea to the south of the Hjaltland group, they were struck by a fresh tempest, and the great wind and conflicting currents of that wild place played havoc with them. Swain, with twelve ships, managed to work down to Fridarey † northernmost of the Orkneys; but Jarl Erlend and three of their longships were carried out to sea. Swain and his people thought the Jarl was lost, yet Swain refused to be cast down. And as soon as he had made good the damage the sea had done he pressed on southward to Sandey in search of late tidings of Jarl Harald's whereabouts—and here, to his great surprize, he encountered Jarl Erlend, who had crept in the day before with spent and weary crews.

So they delayed several days longer at Sandey, and meanwhile Erik, with several small sailing-vessels, embarked on a cruise to gather information. Erik learned very little. He traced Jarl Harald to Strionsey, whence the invaders had sailed south along the eastward edge of the Orkneys, but what Harald's plans were no man could say.

Under the circumstances Swain judged it best to pursue without loss of time, for he fancied this was the opportunity he had forseen to grind Jarl Harald between his upper millstone and Jarl Rognvald's lower; and to make assurance surer he sent away a messenger by the westward route in one of Erik's small craft, a fast sailer, to seek out Rognvald at Thorsa and apprize him of Harald's presence. With Erlend and the fleet he followed in the groove Jarl Harald's keels had ploughed, past Austrsker's isolated dot, across the open water and between Dyrness and Kolbeinsey, on south under the cliffs of Borgarey and so around the rugged bulk of Rognvaldsey, and never once sighted a hostile sail.

But off Papuli a third tempest smote them. Several of the barges and transports were wrecked or sunk; others were driven away from the course; and still others voluntarily parted company with the fleet, glad of the excuse to avoid the dangers of the impending battle, for all except the most stout-hearted were exhusted by the constant struggle with the sea, the back-breaking tugging at the oars, the lash of the cold salt spray. When they doubled the cape of Thordarekra they were reduced to one-half the strength with which they had sailed from the Hjaltlands, and they put into Bardsvik on that westerly coast of Rognvaldsey to rest and refit and secure food that was not water-soaked.

And again luck dealt them a shrewd blow midriff-high. Swain left to Erlend the reconditioning of their ships while he, who knew the country best, went ashore to procure the food they needed and question the island-folk concerning Jarl Harald and as to whether Jarl Rognvald had yet sailed from Thorsa.

At the first steading they came to the,

*Now Sumburgh Roost. †Fair Isle.

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farmer cheerfully offered them a sheep and a pig, with a sack of corn. He knew nothing about Jarl Harald, but he remarked:

"How is it you are not with Jarl Rognvald, Swain?"

He knew Swain, as a matter of course.

"We have been cruising apart," answered Swain. "I am now searching for the Lord Jarl."

"Is that so?" said the farmer, chuckling. "Well, you have not far to search. I heard an hour ago that the Jarl and all his men are lying at Vividag on the east coast just over the hill there."

"I give you thanks," replied Swain. "In that case I will go on by foot. I was driven past Vividag yesterday in the tempest."

He ordered the men with him to continue the work of gathering provisions, and himself proceeded alone by a path which wended across the spinal hills of the island's middle. He encountered no one and arrived at last at a point from which he could look down upon Vividag creek. One glance at the crowded array of dragons told him something was wrong. Jarl Rognvald could never unaided have mustered a dozen longships. So he proceeded more cautiously than hitherto and dodged in behind some farm buildings, whence he could secure a distinct view of the men who passed back and forth along the strand.

He had not held this position a quarter of an hour when he identified certain friends of Jarl Harald's mingling amicably in a group with Jarl Rognvald's house-carls; and later he saw the two Jarls come forth from a skalli by the creek and go aboard Jarl Rognvald's dragon.

This was sufficient to convince Swain that he and Jarl Erlend had been betrayed, but he desired to secure more detailed knowledge of what had happened; and for this reason he lingered in his hiding-place until dark, when he ventured closer to see if he might overhear the discussions which were going on around the fires the Jarls' men had kindled on the shores of the creek.

He heard little save ordinary gossip as naturally the common folk knew nothing of the chiefs' intentions; but he had a stroke of unexpected good fortune, for in the darkness he encountered Arni Rafn's son, that one of Jarl Harald's house-carls who had stuck fast with his shield in the door of Jarl Harald's borg at Kirkiuvag when Swain and Erlend made their attack upon it. This Arni was no longer an armored man but waited upon the Jarl and instructed his serving-men, and he made no outcry when Swain caught him by the throat, tossed him over one shoulder and carried him swiftly out of earshot of the men by the fires.

Nor was it necessary for Swain to threaten him unduly to secure the information he sought. Arni knew more than the house-carls because he usually stood behind Jarl Harald's seat and ran his errands. He answered eagerly all Swain's questions, alternating his replies with pleas that his life be spared, and every time Swain suggested a new form of torment his memory was stirred afresh.

By his story—which was substantially correct—it appeared that Jarl Harald had sailed from Strionsey to Caithness, dispatching envoys ahead of him to ask of Jarl Rognvald a peaceful meeting on the plea that Swain's real intention was to make away with both of them and erect his creature, Erlend, as sole Jarl. Various important men, both of the Orkneys and of Caithness, undertook this mission out of resentment against Swain and Erlend for the stopping of the traffic with Norway during the Summer, and their arguments bore so heavily upon Jarl Rognvald that he consented to meet Jarl Harald at Thorsa and discuss the situation with him.

To say truth, Rognvald was in the mood for receiving Jarl Harald peaceably, since he was more than a little concerned over the strength of the fleet Swain and Erlend had raised to go with them to the Hjaltlands, outnumbering largely, as it did, the force he had been able to muster to take to Thorsa; and the report Jarl Harald's emissaries gave him of the high-handed way in which Swain and Erlend had acted in the Hjaltlands was calculated to emphasize the misgivings previously planted in his mind.

But they did not rest with this. They told him also that it was common talk in the islands that Swain and Erlend only bided the right moment to turn against himself, their plan being to dispose of him and Jarl Harald singly, first playing one against the other as far as they could. Jarl Harald confirmed these charges when he came to Thorsa, and likewise appealed to Jarl Rognvald to remember their long

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intercourse together, during which their relation had been almost that of father and son.

"It is possible," said Jarl Harald, "that I was ill-advised in some of my actions after you went away, cousin, but that was no reason why Swain should have undertaken to destroy me and take away my rights. In any case I have learned much since those days, and while I am resolved to win back my property I am also determined to deal more justly with the people and merit their affection. If they were left to themselves the Orkney-folk would gladly have me return—as I am persuaded they would never have been willing to agree to my exile."

"What you say affects me very much," Jarl Rognvald answered after deliberation. "Swain has assumed an authority out of all proportion to his birth, and no Jarl can live in peace so long as he is permitted to continue in his present estate. As for Erlend he is a drunkard, and although his father was my brother he was never my friend, nor did I ever trust him. Erlend is as dangerous in his way as Swain, and between the two of them we shall be always at odds."

The end of it was that they handfasted in the presence of numerous witnesses and swore a solemn oath to combine their fortunes and war without respite upon Swain and Erlend until these twain should be driven forth from the islands or slain. And the delays to which Swain was put by the rough weather gave them time to sail from Caithness to intercept him. If the last tempest had not swept him south past Vividag, veiled by the low clouds and the driving rain, they must have sighted him approaching and fallen upon him with overwhelming forces, augmented from day to day by those of the boendr who disliked Erlend's ways and were prevailed upon to distrust Swain's motives.

Having wrung all he could from Arni—which was all that Arni knew—Swain bound his prisoner with a straw rope he found in a stable and cast him into an outbuilding. This attended to, he debated his next step. His first instinct was to be off at speed across the island and carry Erlend and their ships to a safer haven. But he was consumed by a bitter rage against Jarl Rognvald and Jarl Harald—more especially now against Jarl Rognvald—and he was moved to perform some exploit which would acquaint them with his feelings and remind them that he was not an enemy to be lightly disposed of.

Before the light failed he had noted that several rowboats were drawn up on the shore of the creek near its mouth, and he conceived a plan for using one of them. Carefully avoiding the fires on the strand and the groups of men who lounged around the various buildings, he reached the creek unobserved and slipped into a boat which was masked by shadows. The moon had not yet risen and the last of the storm-clouds still scurried across the sky, so that a small boat with one man in it was a very inconspicuous object upon the waters of the creek.

Without being challenged Swain rowed gently almost to the side of Jarl Rognvald's dragon, *Farseeker*, and then drifted aft until he was close by the poop, where candles gleamed and he could hear the voices of men talking. Clutching a shield-slot on the gunwale, he stood erect and peered over into the narrow area in front of the small poop-cabin. As he had expected, Jarl Rognvald, Jarl Harald and several other chiefs sat on the deck in their cloaks discussing what had become of him.

He thrust his head forward into the candlelight.

"You are concerning yourselves without cause," he said mockingly. "My enemies never have to look for me very long."

"Swain!" gasped Jarl Rognvald.

Jarl Harald crossed himself fearfully. The others goggled in amazement.

"I expected better than this from you, Lord Jarl," continued Swain, addressing Rognvald. "We have been brothers-in-arms many years, and you never trusted me in vain."

"If I had continued to trust you, you would have wrought with me as you did with Jarl Paul, my predecessor, or Jarl Harald here," retorted Jarl Rognvald, recovering himself.

Swain raised a spear in his right hand.

"As to the manner of my dealing with you, I could have pierced either one of you had I desired to," he answered. "But I am not Olvir Rosta. Not even young Harald there would I slay from cover in the dark although he aided Olvir in the slaying of my mother."

"It is a lie!" cried Harald fiercely.

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"Then it is a lie that Jarl Rognvald betrayed me at your urgence! Ho, you are an honorable pair. The skalds will sing enviously of you."

Jarl Rognvald rose to his knees.

"Are you taunting us, Swain?" he asked quietly. "If your men are waiting to hew us as we sit, bid them forward."

Swain laughed aloud, so that men on the forecastle of *Farseeker* heard.

"My men!" he repeated. "What need have I of house-carls when I can steal up on you alone? I say I might have slain the pair of you and escaped clear. Who would have ruled the Orkneys then?"

Jarl Harald bounded to his feet, crimson with passion, regardless of Swain's menacing spear.

"Ho, benchmen, forecastlemen!" he shouted. "Swain is on us!"

There was a rush of men and a clanking of weapons, but Swain only grinned in the candle-light.

"You must have more than one longship crew to catch me, youngling," he jeered.

He dropped out of sight into his boat, gave a mighty push against the longship's hull which sent his little craft dancing away into the shadows and then lay at full length upon the thwarts, paddling with his hands. Behind him rose a vast uproar which communicated itself to the rest of the Jarls' fleet. Torches commenced to gleam. Small boats were cast loose. Oars splashed. But the hue and cry subsided as quickly as it had begun. Jarl Rognvald's voice mastered the confusion.

"Hold!" he roared. "Let no man stir. Swain has done a gallant deed. He held our lives in his hand and spared them. Shall we try to be less generous?"

"Humph!" grunted Swain to himself, gingerly shipping his oars. "There spoke the Rognvald I knew of old. Perhaps we shall yet come to terms, Lord Jarl!"

And it is certain that from that moment Jarl Rognvald ceased to accuse Swain of disloyalty, and in the opposing camp Swain was swift to halt any who spoke of Jarl Rognvald's treachery.

"He has made a mistake," said Swain. "It is for us to mend it."

But neither of them could avert the toll of death the quarrel was to require. That which followed was the bloodiest Winter the Orkneys had known since the fight off Raudabiorg in Jarl Thorfinn's time.

XII

SWAIN rowed ashore on the bank of the creek opposite to the camp-fires of the Jarls' men and then ran at speed across the island until he came to the stead of the farmer who had told him Jarl Rognvald was at Vidivag. Lights burned in the skalli and he heard men singing; so he looked in the door before he entered. Jarl Erlend was making merry with a few of his cronies, and there was not so much as a serving-man standing guard outside. Swain strode in with a black frown on his face.

"You are eager for death, Erlend," he said abruptly.

Erlend peered at him uncertainly through the torch-smoke, and the other drinkers called out jests which Swain ignored.

"Do you resent my pleasure so much that you threaten me?" inquired the Jarl.

"Jarl Rognvald and Jarl Harald with all their men are at Vidivag just over the hills," returned Swain.

The silly, bleared expression faded from Erlend's face; his friends breathed heavily.

"Together?" quavered Erlend.

"Together," said Swain. "Rognvald has joined Harald."

Erlend was no coward, whatever else men said of him. He staggered erect and unhitched his sword-belt from the back of the chair in which he sat.

"We are saved more searching then," he said. "Let us go and make an end of them while they sleep."

"No," denied Swain. "There are too many of them. Also they are not drunk."

Erlend looked uncomfortable.

"I did not know," he muttered. "We thought——"

"If one man had gone from this stead with news of our coming you would all be dead by now," answered Swain. "As it happens they will be here any moment, and it is not a question of our attacking but of escaping before they come."

Erlend sat down again.

"It is fortunate for all of us that Swain discovered this," he said to his friends. "It is my judgment that we should be guided by him in what we do. What do you say?"

They all agreed to this, Swain standing grimly by. They had no use for him; he had no use for them. They knew it; he knew it. He knew too that they knew

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that his was the master-brain in their enterprise.

"If you would have my opinion," he said now, "it is that we should sail with the dawn for Caithness."

"Without refitting the ships?" asked Erlend doubtfully.

"Without an eye-blink's delay," affirmed Swain. "If any craft are not seaworthy abandon them."

"So be it," said Erlend. "We must get the men aboard at once."

They pulled out of Bardvik in the teeth of the wind at the first showing of the false dawn, six large longships full manned. The smaller craft and a few faint-hearted men and sick they left behind. But before they departed Swain was at pains to tell the island-folk from whom they had obtained provisions that his purpose was to go west as early as he could to the Sudreyar.

"Jarl Rognvald has betrayed us," he declared with a great play of indignation. "But he is too strong for us with Jarl Harald to aid him, and inasmuch as we cannot abide with safety in the Orkneys we will go into the western isles to winter."

Erlend stood by in some amazement while he said this, and as they parted on the beach the Jarl said:

"Is it in truth your idea that we must abandon our cause, Swain?"

"Would you have our enemies know our intentions?" returned Swain.

"No, but——"

"I have prepared for them a story which will seem within reason, and although I do not expect them to believe it at once, in the long run I hope that we may arrange matters so as to give us an opportunity to surprize them."

"I am content with that plan," answered Jarl Erlend. "It irks me to become a fugitive."

"He who is fugitive today sits in the Jarl's borg tomorrow," rejoined Swain.

They passed the Pentland Firth with much difficulty, and indeed that night there arose another tempest similar to those which had pounded them in the north; but the effect of this one was to bar the pursuit which Jarl Rognvald and Jarl Harald attempted. The two Jarls were beaten back into Vidivag, and for several weeks the Firth was impassable by reason of the winds and the currents which would have twisted a vessel's timbers from its keel.

Swain took advantage of this period of safety to repair their ships. Also at his instructions a large body of men went up into the country to drive down cattle; and the first day that the weather moderated he sent secretly a man in a fishing-boat to the islands to spread the tidings that Swain and Jarl Erlend had made a great strand-hewing* in Caithness preparatory to sailing for the Sudreyar so soon as they had a favorable wind.

Jarl Harald and other men received this news with relief, but Jarl Rognvald said that it was a warning to them.

"The more certainly Swain talks of going away, the more certain you may be that he is to be expected any hour."

He insisted that they should row their fleet around through the Firth and up into the inner waters to Skalpeid†, where they would be in a convenient position to move in any direction to meet Swain should he return. He also saw to it that the crews slept aboard their vessels despite the men's grumblings.

Word of this, as well as of all other happenings in the islands, came to Swain from friends he still had among the Orkney-folk, and he said:

"Jarl Rognvald is no easy warrior to fool. We must wear out his people's patience."

Jarl Erlend asked him how, and Swain answered:

"We will make the first move our announced plan calls for."

That day, despite a contrary wind, their fleet left eastern Caithness and rowed west along the coast to Thorsa, where they sought a haven and remained for several weeks longer until Winter had arrived and the weather had become continuously blustery.

In Skalpeid Jarl Rognvald laughed at Jarl Harald and others who had questioned his statement that Swain would not go to the Sudreyar.

"Do you see?" he said. "He was all for the Sudreyar, but now when it becomes overlate for sea-voyaging he tarries at Thorsa whence he can easily strike at us."

But the next week Jarl Rognvald was confounded by sure intelligence from his spies that Swain had in fact sailed from Thorsa and was already far to the west of Scotland.

"What now, Rognvald?" demanded Jarl

*Killing of cattle on the beach to victual viking ships.
†Scapa.

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Harald exultingly. "I tell you we were in the right. Swain has had his bellyful and is off to win new allies in the West. In the Spring he will come again perhaps, but now——"

"Now is the time to watch," persisted Jarl Rognvald. "All that you say is borne out, yet I am convinced it is not like Swain to give over so easily. He was always one for testing his sword before he fought time's battle."

"But he was never rash," pointed out Jarl Harald. "As it is he has lost more than half of his following."

Jarl Rognvald wagged his gray head thoughtfully.

"With six longships Swain would fight the Two Kings. What fear has he of two Jarls?"

"Well, well, have it your own way, cousin," said Jarl Harald. "But remember the men are shipworn and hungry for their homes."

"Better that than be graveworn," countered Jarl Rognvald.

He had his way, but none shared his fears. And so the Winter days grew shorter and shorter and the nights longer and blacker, and the winds shrieked endlessly about the island cliffs.

XIII

SIX longships tossed on a choppy, leaden sea. Overhead a gray mirk of clouds hung low. Eastward the rock-bound coast of Scotland rose above a creamy smother of surf. Westward was the open Atlantic.

The longships rowed with furled sails dead against the wind which was blowing out of the southwest. The rattling of the oars in the oar-holes and the whine of the rigging were the only sounds. The men who stood on poop and forecastle, no less than those who labored on the waist-benches, were grimly silent.

Swain, on the poop of his great dragon, *Deathbringer*, turned to Erik, who stood with him as he conned the steersmen.

"Do you know that point, Erik?"

The Icelander squinted at the loom of the promontory.

"It should be Staur in Sudrland," he answered. "We are far enough out."

Swain nodded.

"And far enough away from home," he added.

"Touching that no man will question you," grunted Erik. "But I see not how it is to be mended."

"Thus," replied Swain.

And he took a ludr-horn that hung at his belt and winded a shrill call which pierced keenly the contentious noises of wind and sea. The steersmen of the other vessels peered forward at the signal, puzzling what it meant. There was a let-up in the effort of the rowers. All eyes searched through the spume-drift to see what was toward. Jarl Erlend's dragon pulled out of position and rowed up abreast of *Deathbringer*, a frown of concern on the Jarl's face.

"Are you taking in water?" he shouted as he came within earshot.

"No, no," replied Swain. "It was my thought that the men must be tired of oar-work, when if we turned around we might have a fair wind."

"And steer back to the Orkneys?" queried Erlend, amazed. "Into the jaws of Rognvald and Harald?"

"Even so," assented Swain. "We have gone sufficiently far to convince them that we intend to voyage to the Sudreyar, and if my guess is correct this wind will bring rain and snow, under cover of which we should be able to make our return without risk of detection."

Jarl Erlend plucked at his mustache in some perplexity.

"You are for battle then?" he shouted.

"If matters fall out as I consider probable, yes," returned Swain. "But first we must find our way to the islands and learn what the Jarls are doing."

"It is likely that we sail to our deaths," complained Erlend. "They outnumber us too much for your craft to overcome them."

"That is to be seen," responded Swain coolly.

And at his order his men unshipped their oars and hauled up the dragon's square sail with salt-cracked hands. Erlend did the same, and one by one the other longships brought their heads around, drew in oars and made sail. When dusk closed down with a flurry of snow they were heading east of north, foam scumming over their bows as they dipped and plunged across the booming Atlantic rollers, weary oarsmen sleeping wherever a shield or an oar-bench gave a bit of shelter from the cold and wet.

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"I suppose you know what you are about, Swain," was Erik's only comment.

"Tomorrow is a wall no man can see through," rejoined Swain. "But many a guess has jumped it."

On the fourth day before Simon's-mass they came to Vagaland in Haey and from a friendly farmer there heard that Jarl Rognvald and Jarl Harald lay at Skalpeid still with fourteen ships. The snow had followed Swain and Erlend north and east, and Swain put it to Erlend and the other chiefs that here was the opportunity to cripple their enemies and perhaps to win back the islands. Jarl Erlend was undecided, but a number of his friends cried out against Swain's suggestions, saying that it meant certain destruction.

"The Two Jarls are double our number in men," they said. "And they keep a strict watch."

This was true according to the report in Vagaland; but Swain answered:

"A strict watch! I know what that means. Keep men on the watch for weeks at a time in the cold and the rain, and if nothing happens they watch with shut eyes. Let us go into them this night before they can have heard of our return, and we will not leave them a longship to fight in."

"Fourteen ships against six!" protested Jarl Erlend.

"Yes, six ships with crews awake and ready against fourteen manned by people unawares," replied Swain.

They argued back and forth for an hour, but finally Swain won Jarl Erlend to his opinion, and they decided to make the attempt.

During the afternoon the snow changed to sleet. The hands of the rowers all but froze to the oar-handles; but Swain pushed his crews onward. They passed by dark between Flottey and Rognvaldsey and so pulled into the inner waters, and long past midnight they steered up Skalpeid haven, where the longships of the Two Jarls lay in double rows, seven and seven, close inshore and so near together that a man might jump from one to the next.

Off the entrance to the haven Swain divided his little fleet into two squadrons of three vessels each. One he commanded; the other Jarl Erlend led. All six longships moved to the attack under sail in order that they might approach with the least amount of noise. Swain knew no more than the rest what reception they might meet or what the disposition of the Two Jarls' ships would be; but he was convinced that if his folk could get to swordwork without having been discovered first the surprized crews would break for the shore, and to increase the effect of the surprize he directed Jarl Erlend to come in on the north side of the anchorage while he cut in from the south.

The consequence of this plan was that he caught the enemy between two fires, and the success of the maneuver was assured by the peculiar formation in which the Two Jarls had disposed their ships. The bleakness of the night likewise had discouraged the watchmen nominally stationed upon every poop and forecastle, and the remainder of the crews were lying in their fur sleeping-bags under the waist-awnings or in the decked spaces at each end.

In the pelting hail and sleet even Jarl Rognvald had seen a safeguard against attack. He had not unarmed himself, but he had sought the protection of the poop-cabin of his dragon. As for Jarl Harald and the other chiefs, they had unarmed themselves for greater comfort and all lay under cover. Aside from Jarl Rognvald there was not a man in the fleet of the Two Jarls who had doubted for a moment the truth of the reports that Swain and Erlend had fled to the Sudreyar, and Jarl Rognvald was obliged to admit, when he was pressed, that he had no reasons to base his suspicions upon, except his instinctive belief that Swain would not so easily accept defeat.

So Swain's longships drove into the extremities of the two lines like lean ghosts swathed in the silver mantles of the sleet. A startled cry from a watchman—an echo from another — then the crash of meeting hulls, the clangor of arms and armor and the battle-cry yelped clear above the drumming of the icy particles and the roar of the wind.

"Board! Board!" shouted Swain.

And faintly through the night Jarl Erlend's voice answered from the northern extremity of the enemy's lines.

There was no whistling of arrow-flights, no thudding of spears on shields and mail. Every man in Swain's ships went overside to the gunwales or decks of the nearest hostile vessel, shield on arm and sword in hand. Some of them fell upon the canvas

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awning or tent, which was stretched over the waist of each anchored longship, and many of the Two Jarls' men, imprisoned beneath this cumbersome arrangement, died without opportunity to strike a blow in their defense.

Swain boarded first the vessel adjoining Jarl Rognvald's. He swept it clear in one fierce rush. Then, as torches commenced to blaze upon the scene, he and his followers leaped the short gap to the next ship, and found Jarl Rognvald urging his dazed crew out of their sleeping-bags. This was the crisis of the fight. Swain's other two ships were engaged with the outer vessels of the second line. And at the far extremity of this second line Jarl Harald, fighting like a lion in his jerkin, was making head against Erlend's onslaughts. For a brief period of weapon-clashing the issue hung upon the success or failure of Jarl Rognvald's defense.

With the handful of men who had slept in the poop-cabin with him, the Jarl succeeded in driving back Erik when the Icelander swarmed over his stern and then stormed forward across the wriggling footing of the waist-awnings, upheld by heaps of men who could only escape by slashing holes with their daggers. Forward of the mast Rognvald encountered Swain, who had carried the forecastle and was killing those in the waist who did not leap overboard into the icy water. The Jarl put a stop to this, and his men recovered their courage and fought beside him as best they could, unhelmed, unmailed.

Beaten off, uncertain who opposed him in the darkness, Swain retired to the forecastle, rooted out torches and in their illumination dashed aft again. In the meantime too Erik had clambered back upon the poop and was mastering the opposition of a little band of leaderless men. Jarl Rognvald was between two hostile parties. But he was not ready to yield. He left a screen of men to hold Swain and hurled himself a second time at Erik, whose axe was red from spike to butt. Erik met him, chest to chest, but was glad to scramble to the gunwale and leap safe and whole to *Deathbringer's* deck.

For a moment Jarl Rognvald stood there at the break of the poop, his tall figure and winged helm of gilt outlined by the torch-light which flickered palely in the sleet-shot night.

"Ho, Jorsala-farers!" he called to his house-carls. "Show Swain how you fought the heathen of Serkland!"

They answered him with a shout of triumph, and once more he slashed into Swain's advancing line. But this time Swain was not to be beaten back. He had recognized the Jarl and knew what must depend upon this vessel's capture. Also as soon as Rognvald turned his attention to Swain Erik recovered the after portion of the vessel, and the bandy-legged little Icelander with his terrible axe began to gnaw again at the rear of the Jarl's position. Presently Jarl Rognvald had been hammered back by Swain's party until he stood with no more than half-a-dozen followers around the mast, and Swain called out to his own men to lower their weapons.

"We have you fast, Lord Jarl," he said, stepping out in the blotch of light shed by a torch one of his people had thrust into a shield-clot of the gunwale. "Render yourself to me, and I will give you peace."

"I am not one to render myself to any one, Swain," returned Jarl Rognvald, smiling.

"But here is no dishonor, Lord Jarl," urged Swain. "As I myself will be first to bear witness."

"I do not see you surrendering in such a plight," objected the Jarl, yet smiling calmly. "As for dishonor I can not escape that, having been overcome by a force less than half as numerous as mine."

"But if you persist, Lord Jarl, you will be slain," cried Swain. "And I would not have your death for all the wealth in the Orkneys."

"Those are good words, Swain, and I see that you must have some merit in your character for all your disloyalty," said Jarl Rognvald. "It is my inclination to assist a brave enemy whensoever I can, and I am of a mind to aid you now."

Men say that was one of the few times Swain Olaf's son was observed to be bewildered.

"How?" he asked.

For answer Jarl Rognvald sprang lightly across the deck, moving with amazing speed for a man of his years and weight, gained the port gunwale, slashed free one of the stays of the mast and caught hold of the loose end of the rope. Then he took a little run, bounded into the air and swung over the gunwale, out—out into the encircling darkness and landed in the waist of the next dragon.

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"After him," shouted Erik.

But Swain raised his sword.

"Let the Jarl go," he ordered. "He is too brave a man to be taken in this shameful manner."

Swain likewise offered peace to the few of Jarl Rognvald's men who were still alive on this ship, and ordered his men to endeavor to do as little slaying as possible. When he resumed his advance, leaping down the line from longship to longship, he shouted:

"Down arms, Rognvald's men! Swain gives you peace!"

This was the end of the fighting, for the heart was clean gone out of Jarl Rognvald's followers, and the Jarl himself bade all shift as they could, and set the example by casting off his mail and swimming to shore. Much the same thing happened where Jarl Erlend attacked. Jarl Harald resisted him until there were but five men remaining on Harald's ship, and then Harald, like Rognvald, leaped into the water and also gained the shore. Some of the Two Jarls' crews were so frozen by the bitter chill of the water and the sleety air that they never reached the beach, and others perished of sickness afterward. But the most part came safe to land.

In the fighting more than a hundred were slain, including some of the best men of the islands and a number of chiefs and boendr, and twice that number were wounded. Swain and Erlend lost several score of good men too. It was the sorest scath reaped in the Orkeys in the memory of man. Yes, worse even then Raudabiorg fight when eighty men were laid in one grave.

The Two Jarls ran from Skalpeid to Jarl Rognvald's steading at Orphir, and from here they sailed in two small boats, one with two men and the other with only three, across the Pentland Firth to Caithness. Their friends followed them as opportunity served, for there was no doubt in any man's mind that Swain and Jarl Erlend had recovered the dominion of the Orkneys.

XIV

JARL ERLEND and his cronies were much elated by the success of their exploit, and it is to be said that the Jarl was loud in his protestations of gratitude to Swain. There had been a time when he regarded Swain with jealousy, but the longer they consorted together the more he perceived the integrity of Swain's character. For on this all men who knew Swain were agreed: He was very violent to those who harmed him or for whom he conceived a dislike; but to any who gave him ordinary friendship and treated him fairly and with justice he was loyal even though such loyalty might not be to his immediate interest.

Yet Erlend and Swain were never upon terms of complete amity because of the mischief-making of the Jarl's cup-mates, who were continually criticizing Swain and seeking to undermine his authority. They seldom succeeded beyond a slight degree, but Swain held it against Erlend that he did not dismiss them as trouble-seekers, and Erlend was occasionally irritated because Swain could not get along better with those who were most intimate with him.

These men caused the nearest to an open breach between Erlend and Swain after the winning of the fight off Skalpeid. It came about in this way:

When the booty had all been secured, Swain claimed for his share Jarl Rognvald's dragon and the treasures and property it contained: and inasmuch as he announced that he would be satisfied with this, everybody said he was very moderate in his desires and advised Jarl Erlend to agree to the claim, which Erlend did. The very next day Swain called up some tenants of Jarl Rognvald from Orphir and bade them take the dragon across the Pentland Firth to wherever Jarl Rognvald lay in Caithness.

"And tell him," added Swain, "that this gift comes from Swain, not for any gift the Jarl can make to Swain in return but to signify to him that Swain was never his enemy and has fought him only because he would have it so."

Jarl Rognvald was vastly pleased with the gift and expressed himself fittingly to Swain in return for it; but Jarl Erlend's friends professed indignation and asserted that Swain was preparing overtures to their enemies in order to betray them at an early day. Jarl Erlend laughed at this, yet he was annoyed that Swain should have given aid to a man who was his enemy.

"Of your faithfulness to me, Swain," he said, "I have no doubt. But I ask you to remember that your gift to Rognvald may enable him to undertake an attack upon us, where otherwise he would have been helpless."

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"You concern yourself for no reason there," replied Swain. "We have some twenty longships, which is twice as many as we can find crews for from men who will be true to us. Also it is impossible that Jarl Rognvald can defeat us with one longship or with any number of ships and men he may secure, providing we maintain a vigilant watch."

Erlend admitted that this was true and inquired what Swain thought they should do to protect themselves.

"I would return to Vagaland, whence we sailed here," answered Swain promptly. "It lies fair on the shore of the Pentland Firth, and from it we can watch the whole coast of Caithness so that not a small boat can move any distance but we should see it. It will be impossible for our enemies to surprize us there."

But Jarl Erlend's advisers, who had chafed at the easy way in which Swain had disposed of their attempt to prove him treacherous, rebelled strongly at this.

"We are in the midst of Winter," they said. "In Vagaland there are no sufficient buildings to house us, and we should be obliged to spend all our time in the ships."

"Where else do you think to spend your time?" answered Swain. "We are at war."

"I do not look forward to spending the Winter on shipboard," spoke up Erlend. "You are unreasonable, Swain."

"It is a question of your own life, of course," returned Swain.

"But we can move to a strong place where we shall be safe from surprize——"

"No place is safe from surprize."

"I have in mind a place which will be."

"Where?"

"There is a borg on the isle of Damsey in the Aurridafiord that——"

"It is a strong position," admitted Swain; "but it is not so safe as Vagaland."

"That may be," said Erlend; "but in Vagaland we should have trouble in securing provisions for all our men."

"You could find provisions," retorted Swain. "But I am not so sure one island could furnish enough ale."

Men laughed at this, and Erlend said:

"You say truly, Swain. We are not water-drinkers like you and cannot sit out the Winter without liquor, especially as the days are likely to pass slowly with nothing to do but watch."

Swain perceived that the Jarl's determination was fixed to go to Damsey; so he answered:

"If you must do it you will do it, though I say no. But I will not give my consent unless you promise me that you will sleep on board ship. You cannot hold the Orkneys from a bog. The man who rules here, rules from a longship."

Erlend's folk grumbled again, but the Jarl assented, and the quarrel which some would have liked to start was never born. Yet this matter was to have far-reaching consequences as shall be seen. No man can say how prolonged will be the flow of reactions from any deed or thought, and Swain's gift to Jarl Rognvald, which aroused such opposition as to compel him to compromise with Jarl Erlend on the question of the location of their fleet, was destined to produce results he could not have foreseen.

So the longships were moved to Damsey, and with so many to handle Swain and Erlend were obliged to man each with skeleton crews. For the boendr and the common folk in the Orkneys by now were so weary of fighting and ravaging that none would come forward to aid either side unless he were bound by ties of blood or gain to one of the contestants; and at Damsey the most of the captured ships were drawn up on the beach under sheds and their equipment stored in the borg.

The others were moored in a line, fastened together and near to the shore, with the waist-awnings rigged all the time for protection from the Winter gales; but in the daylight hours there were never more than a handful of guards on board. The remainder of the crews were in the borg, gathered around blazing fires in the different buildings, eating and drinking lustily and comparing stories and telling of exploits and listening to the sagas the skalds recited.

It was a very merry time for Jarl Erlend's friends. They had plenty to drink and leisure to enjoy the drinking and if Swain ever frowned upon their carelessness or insisted upon breaking up the roystering some three hours past candle-lighting in the evening, they secured more pleasure from making quips at his expense. But by dint of constant attention he saw to it that their company were on shipboard every night, and he or Erik was alert until morning to make sure the watchmen kept watch.

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Five nights before Christmas, seeing that discipline had been established and no rumors of an attack came from Caithness where the Two Jarls nursed their misfortunes, Swain decided he would visit his property at Gairsey across the Aurridafiord and make arrangements for the protection of his sons. Erik and most of his people attended him, as they were desirous of passing the Yuletide with their families. He found all well at Gairsey, since the Two Jarls had not molested his tenants or belongings, Jarl Rognvald because his nature on the whole was just, and Jarl Harald because of compunction for his unwitting responsibility for Olvir's raid.

On the second night after his arrival home a man named Gisl, who was passing from island to island and was fresh come from Damsey, stopped at Swain's skalli for a night's shelter, and at the evening meal, as he sat with Swain at the high table, he remarked:

"Jarl Erlend's folk are making a mighty Yule-feast this year."

"I do not doubt it," said Swain.

"Yes," said Gisl, "last night and the night before that they drank all night."

"All night?" repeated Swain. "In the borg?"

"Yes, the second night even the watchmen came up from the ships."

"Humph," growled Swain. "I suspect that I shall not have long to provide for this Jarl."

Then he summoned Erik and said to him:

"Take boat at once and go to Jarl Erlend at Damsey. Tell him that Swain warns him he will bring about his death if he does not preserve the order I established for him."

Erik went off with two men, and having a strong favorable wind they reached Damsey by midnight. To make certain that Gisl had not lied Erik boarded the longships and himself ascertained that they were deserted. On the beach too he found no guards, and the gate of the borg gaped open when he came to it. The noise of the singing and boasting could be heard outside the walls.

The Icelander walked straight up to the skalli, no man challenging him, and so entered Jarl Erlend's presence. The Jarl and the chiefs with him were very drunk, and the most of the house-carls too were so full of ale they were hard put to it to stand upright. Erik was obliged to rap on the table in front of Erlend before the Jarl would pay attention to him.

"Ho, ho," hiccuped Erlend then. "So you are back, Erik? Where is Swain?"

"Better say where are Rognvald and Harald?" returned Erik.

"I hope they are as contented as we," shouted one of Erlend's friends.

"If they came upon you thus they would be," said Erik.

"And how does Swain?" asked Erlend.

"He does well, Lord Jarl," replied Erik, "save it to be that he is concerned for you."

"He need not be," answered Erlend.

"He sends you word by me," continued Erik, not heeding the Jarl, "that he warns you you will bring about your death if you do not preserve the order he established for you."

"There is Swain for you," cried another of the Jarl's cronies. "He is always trying to spoil a good time."

"He is a strange man," said a third. "Sometimes he is afraid of nothing, and again he will jump from a shadow."

"He must be sorely frightened," exclaimed a fourth.

But Jarl Erlend would not suffer them to mock Swain.

"He is the best warrior in the North," quoth the Jarl. "When he speaks I heed him—unless it be concerning the value of ale."

There was much laughter over this quip, and Erik spoke again.

"It is you and not Swain who are in danger, Lord Jarl," he said.

"No, no, Erik," replied the Jarl. "I was never safer in my life. I have friends who love me, more dragons than I need, and a strong borg to seek refuge in."

Erik laughed so harshly that all eyes turned to him.

"When I sailed into the haven a half-hour since," he said, "I climbed all over your dragons. No man halted me on the beach, and I walked in at the gate of your borg and up here without so much as a drunken house-carl asking my business."

This sobered Jarl Erlend, and he inquired if it was indeed so. Erik reaffirmed it.

"That is not well," said the Jarl. "And it is true I promised Swain I would sleep aboard ship."

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His friends set up such an uproar that it was impossible to tell what they were saying, and Jarl Erlend quelled it finally by calling out:

"My promise holds good only for myself. You may suit yourselves."

"Better stay here, Lord Jarl!" they cried.

"Better all go aboard ship," rasped Erik.

"No, no," denied the Jarl. "It is foolish to speak of danger, Erik. I will go because, as I have said, I promised Swain, and I owe him too much to show him so little courtesy as to violate a promise. But I see no reason why my friends should inconvenience themselves."

Twenty-four men announced that they would go with the Jarl, and they rolled a keg of ale down to the beach and carried it aboard his dragon, where they finished it before they finally slept.

Erik bided with them, and albeit he had assisted in the finishing of the ale he was the only man on the ship who could pretend to control his limbs. Similarly he was the only man to spring instantly awake several hours after, when a war-cry shrilled in the night and armed men poured over their forecastle.

He perceived that there were too many of the attackers for them to be resisted by a score of drunken men, and he ran aft to the poop where Jarl Erlend slept. Two of Jarl's servants slept at his door, and they roused stupidly when Erik pummeled them, but all three were unable to stir the Jarl from the ale-stupor in which he lay.

In the wan moonlight Erik could see the enemy thrusting aside the feeble opposition that was offered to them. He saw too Jarl Harald leading the boarders, and he knew that if Jarl Harald was present Jarl Rognvald could not be far behind.

"Here is no occasion for fighting," he said. "We must carry him ashore."

"But how?" clamored Erlend's servants. "He will not wake, Erik. See, he does not blink his eyes."

"Take him by his feet," commanded Erik.

And Erik himself took the drunken Jarl under the arms, and so the three of them heaved him overboard into a small boat which lay alongside. The shock of the fall brought Erlend to consciousness, and he was dumbly groping for the truth of the situation when they tumbled after him and put out the oars to pull ashore. But he was still too muscle-bound to be of any avail, and they were seen at once by Jarl Harald's people, who gave chase in other craft.

At the beach Erik and the servants hoisted Erlend ashore and set him on his feet. Erik supported him on one side, and one of the servants on the other. The second man ran away up to the borg, shouting the alarm.

"Take me to the borg," mumbled Erlend.

"Drunken men can no more defend a borg than a longship," replied Erik. "Let us find a farmhouse where you can lie hidden."

But Erlend turned stubborn and insisted upon drawing his sword.

"I won't have it said Jarl Erlend fled from an attack that came of his own error," he said. "What? Be a fugitive again? Not I!"

"You will be a corpse, not a fugitive," answered Erik. "For I tell you plainly, Lord Jarl, your enemies will not take you alive."

"I had rather be dead than a fugitive," replied Erlend.

He pulled himself free of Erik and his servant, and started to walk staggeringly back along the beach. Erik ran after him.

"What troll has stolen your wits, Lord Jarl?" he pleaded. "Flee with us, and we will carry you safe to Swain."

But Jarl Erlend pushed him away.

"No, I have received enough at Swain's hands. He can say with justice that he raised me to high rank and I dragged myself down. It is better that I should make a dignified end."

The enemy already had gained the strand and were running toward them. Erik hesitated,

"The man is fey," he decided at last. "Better leave him to his doom."

The servant who had remained with them scuttled off into a field beyond the beach, and Erik paused behind a rock to see what happened.

Jarl Erlend walked slowly to meet his enemies, wavering somewhat in his progress, but holding his head high. The moon had appeared in its last quarter and a wind had scoured the sky of clouds so that all the stars shone. It was very bright and clear. A man named Helgi Thorfinn's son ran out in front of the attacking party and shouted:

"It is Jarl Erlend."

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"Yes, Helgi," replied the Jarl. "It is I. Are you surprized?"

"It is the best luck I have had since you were the death of my brother at Skalpeid," returned Helgi.

"Perhaps I shall be the means of your death also," said the Jarl.

And he struck with his sword at Helgi's head, but Helgi stooped under the blow and thrust with his spear upward into the Jarl's bowels. The Jarl tottered there a moment while Erik watched, and then sank to the beach; and Helgi withdrew his spear and plunged it in a second time.

This was the manner of the death of Jarl Erlend. The Drunkard, men called him. Yet he died better than he had lived.

XV

AFTER Jarl Erlend was slain Jarl Rognvald and Jarl Harald gathered their people and went up from the beach to attack the borg wherein lay the rest of Erlend's folk. They made short work of the drunken crew, who were glad to surrender and take the peace the Two Jarls offered them. In the confusion Erik returned to the shore and procured a fishing-boat in which he set sail for Gairsey about dawntime. Nobody observed him, and he escaped.

He was the greater part of the day afloat on account of adverse weather, but he came to Swain's skalli while there was yet light. Swain was instructing his two sons in sword-play. They had weapons of wood and shields woven of osiers and belabored each other according to his directions. Swain left them the moment he glimpsed Erik's face.

"What is wrong?" he asked.

"Erlend is dead," replied Erik. "His people are taken."

Swain said nothing for as long as a man requires to kindle a good flame.

"Never trust a drunkard," he said then. "We had gained the highest power, and now he is slain and I shall be a fugitive."

"There are plenty of us will fight for you yet, Swain," cried Erik.

But Swain shook his head.

"You do not understand the Orkney-folk," he answered. "They will fight for a man who has the blood of the Jarls in him, but any other—no matter whether it be me or you—they regard as an upstart akin to themselves. I must shift for myself until I can wring a fair peace from the Jarls or the people compel them to make terms with me."

"Not alone," protested the Icelander.

"No," agreed Swain, "I will take fifty or sixty men with me, but you stay here, Erik."

"I stay here! That is likely," fumed Erik. "I am still chief of your house-carls, Swain."

"And for that reason," returned Swain, "I propose to leave you here in charge of my sons. Whatever punishment the Jarls may visit upon me, I do not think Jarl Rognvald will suffer them to be harmed."

Erik tried to argue further, alleging there were others to whom Swain might leave the custody of his children; but Swain would not hear of it, and when he sailed away that night in a small longship Erik remained at the skalli.

The Icelander was there the next day also when Jarl Rognvald and Jarl Harald arrived with five hundred men. He met them on the strand.

"Do you come in peace, Lord Jarls, or to slay as Olvir did?" he asked.

Jarl Harald flushed and would have answered angrily, but Jarl Rognvald spoke first.

"We come for Swain, Erik," he said. "We will do him no harm if he does not resist us, but he is too dangerous a man to be allowed at liberty at present."

"You must seek elsewhere for him," grunted Erik.

"Has he gone away?"

"Yes, Lord Jarl."

"Where?"

"I do not know, Lord Jarl." And as an afterthought Erik added: "He took with him sufficient men to insure his safety."

Jarl Rognvald looked uncomfortable, and Jarl Harald broke in:

"You see, cousin! There is no living with Swain. He is never content when he is not viking-faring. We shall have him ravaging and burning as long as he lives."

"He will do no harm to any man who does not harm him," retorted Erik.

"I believe that to be the truth," assented Jarl Rognvald. "Could you find Swain, Erik?"

"I have no means of knowing where he is at present," replied the little Icelander warily.

Jarl Rognvald smiled.

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"That may be so, but you will hear from him soon."

"It is possible," admitted Erik.

"When you do, Erik, tell him we shall be glad to give him peace—just as we have already given peace to Erlend's people."

"On what terms?" questioned Erik.

"For Swain?" Jarl Rognvald reflected, and Jarl Harald said:

"He has put me to vast expense, and I expect to be reimbursed for it. Also we should arrange matters so that Swain will not be so powerful in future. His hatreds and dislikes are a menace to all the Orkney-folk, no less than to us Jarls."

"That is true," returned Jarl Rognvald; "but I wish to make it as easy as possible for Swain. Let us say that he is to pay each of us a mark of gold and surrender one-half of his estates and all except one good longship."

Erik snorted contemptuously.

"I do not see Swain agreeing to such terms," he said. "Nor do I see him agreeing to pay any indemnity to Jarl Harald who was the means of his mother being slain by Olvir Rosta."

Jarl Harald drew his sword and shouted:

"Any man who says I had a hand in——"

"Do you tell that to Swain and not to me," replied Erik curtly, and turned his back upon the young Jarl.

Jarl Harald was very wroth and would have broken the truce with Erik, but Jarl Rognvald came between them and insisted that they should handfast. To Erik he said:

"I am requiring you to meet Jarl Harald halfway because I know it consorts with your master's interests that you do not have trouble with my cousin at this time. If he left you here to care for his property and his children you would make an ill beginning by quarreling with one of your rulers."

"Of what use is it for me to remain here if you are going to rob Swain of all his possessions save the longship he sails in?" rejoined Erik.

"You are a hot-tempered man," answered Jarl Rognvald, "or you would not speak so violently. It is not our purpose to deprive Swain of all he has, and I propose to leave him his estate here on Gairsey unless he makes himself so much of a trouble that we shall be obliged to outlaw him. As for his children you may commit them to my care, and I will protect them as my own."

"I thank you for that offer, Lord Jarl," replied Erik more civilly. "But I know that Swain prefers the children to remain in my care. And I will acquaint him, in one way or another, with your terms, although I do not think he will accept them."

"He had better," threatened Jarl Harald. "He is a broken man today for no other reason than that his ambition ran away with him. If he goes too far we shall have to reconsider our generosity."

Erik grinned in an aggravating way he had.

"I have just handfasted with you, Lord Jarl," he remarked; "and as we are friends you will not object if I counsel you as one friend to another not to be assured of Swain's behavior. Many men have tried to conquer Swain, and I never heard of one succeeding. His fortunes may be at low ebb, but he will retrieve them, and for those who endeavor to annoy him I have only pity. They will never know ease or comfort again."

Jarl Harald was all for making a hot retort to this, when Jarl Rognvald interceded and persuaded him away. And later in the day the Two Jarls departed from Gairsey and sailed for Kirkiuvag, having been scrupulous to wreak no damage to Swain's property and to harm no man in life or limb. Jarl Rognvald was well thought of for this consideration, for all men knew that if Jarl Harald had been left to himself he would have been far more severe.

The next day a man named Margad Grim's son came to Erik from Swain and guided him to a cave in Hellisey, the mouth of which was flooded at high water. In the cave, well back from the mouth, lay Swain's longship. It was a damp place and cold, but excellently contrived for hiding.

Erik recounted to Swain his conversation with the Two Jarls and the offer of peace terms which Jarl Rognvald had made, and Swain laughed.

"You gave the right answer, Erik. I rebelled against Jarl Harald because he was unjust, and Jarl Rognvald, however much I may like him, gains no honor from his betrayal of Erlend and me, albeit he was correct in his judgment of Erlend and no good must have come from it had Erlend remained Jarl. Furthermore I do not make peace with Harald on any terms after his part in my mother's slaying, and with Rognvald I will treat only on an equal footing. You may tell them so."

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"What will you do now?" asked Erik curiously.

"There are several matters I shall attend to," replied Swain. "You will hear of me."

Erik left him and went at once to Kirkiuvag to deliver his answer to Jarl Rognvald. And it chanced that as the Icelander stood in the skalli at Kirkiuvag two days after, discussing Swain's answer with the Jarls, a man ran in all out of breath and cried:

"Oh, Lord Jarls, Swain came in a boat to Hrolfsey yesterday and slew Helgi Thorfinn's son, who slew Jarl Erlend at Damsey!"

"Now do you see how advisable it is to treat Swain leniently!" exclaimed Jarl Harald sarcastically.

"Wait, wait," answered Jarl Rognvald. "Let us hear all before we take judgment upon him. What did Swain say?"

"He said that he had meted out a just doom to a man who had slain a brave drunkard without need," replied the messenger.

"There is truth in that," said Jarl Rognvald.

"Truth!" expostulated Jarl Harald. "It is insolence. Erlend was set up by Swain to take my inheritance from me."

"Yes, and it is my thought that you owe your inheritance to Swain," remarked Jarl Rognvald softly.

"If I do, it was for his own interests he aided me," snapped Jarl Harald. "And you have placed your finger upon the reason why neither you nor I can ever be safe so long as he is in the Orkneys. He will make trouble for whoever does not act as he considers proper."

"He got along with me for a score of years without trouble," said Jarl Rognvald, and added, smiling: "I learned my lesson of him young—as perhaps you will."

Jarl Harald started up, flushed with rage.

"Lesson! Lesson! What talk is this of lesson, Lord Jarl? Saving yourself, who are my elder, I bow my head to no man in these parts."

Jarl Rognvald sighed.

"It is to be seen that you have yet something to learn," he answered. "Well, Erik, when next you see Swain ask him for me to ravage as little as is consistent with his needs."

Jarl Harald turned upon his cousin at this.

"Will you tolerate Swain's defiance?" he demanded. "Will you not lift a hand to drive him from the islands when he besets our people?"

"I do not think I could," returned Jarl Rognvald. "Also I am not anxious to cause more fighting in the islands."

"He will not go free if I can prevent it," said Jarl Harald and flung himself forth from the skalli.

Jarl Rognvald turned to Erik, who had been an interested witness to this dispute.

"You had better tell Swain too that he should watch for Jarl Harald," he advised. "And bid him from me do nothing to set the people against him."

In fact nothing more happened for some time. Jarl Harald raged up and down through the islands, regardless of the weather, but Swain always avoided him, although to plague the young Jarl he would show himself occasionally in some distant spot and then when the Jarl heard of it and came after him, would take refuge in his water-cave in Hellisey.

On a day early in the Spring Swain and one other man went to pay a visit to a kinsman named Bard who lived on Sandey. A man named Jon Voeng saw Swain come ashore, and thought it would be a worthy thing to set upon Swain and capture him for Jarl Harald. So he collected six friends and went to Bard's house and knocked upon the door, and when Bard opened to him they all six burst in and rushed at Swain, who was sitting by the fire.

Swain was taken by surprize, but he leaped up and seized the bench he had been sitting on and assailed Jon's party with it. He knocked over several men, and Bard and the man who had come with Swain likewise attacked the invaders so that they turned and fled out of the house. Jon, who had been first, was also last, and Swain sprang after him and dragged him down. It was Jon's fear that Swain would slay him, and indeed Bard quickly spoke up and asked Swain not to imperil those who dwelt in the house by killing one of Jarl Harald's men in it.

"Very well," answered Swain grimly. "It is not my desire to make trouble for others, but I shall punish Jon for his attack, which arises from no just cause, for I have never harmed him nor his family."

He stripped Jon to his shirt and breeches and then drove him forth into the cold air, and it is said that before Jon could find

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a shelter he was badly frost-bitten and several of his toes fell off.

Jarl Harald was very wroth over Jon's misfortune, and without saying anything to Jarl Rognvald he went to Swain's estate at Gairsey and seized from Erik a quantity of corn and meat, cattle and furniture and weapons. Within the week Swain appeared with sixty men at a steading of Jarl Harald's near Kirkiuvag and looted more than an equal amount of food and gear, leaving word with the farm-folk that they might tell their master a fair trade was not a robbery and two could plunder as well as one.

So provoked was Jarl Harald at this and at the reproachments which Jarl Rognvald sent him from Orphir that he dispatched a party of men under a brother of Jon Voeng's to seize Swain's children. They came to Gairsey very early in the morning when there were few awake, overpowered Erik in his bed and carried away the two boys. Their purpose was to conduct the children to Jarl Harald at Kirkiuvag, but on the way through the Aurridafiord they encountered Jarl Rognvald in his dragon, and the Jarl hailed them, asking what they did.

They told him somewhat shamefacedly, and he exclaimed:

"Do you seek to be killed?"

"No, Lord Jarl," they answered. "We are only obeying Jarl Harald's orders."

"Then your lord is more foolish than I had supposed him," said Jarl Rognvald. "If he had imprisoned these children Swain would have set the whole island ablaze, and it is my opinion the people would have aided him. Take them back to Gairsey at once. Should harm befall them you who seized them would not live a week."

Jarl Rognvald continued on to Kirkiuvag and had serious speech with Jarl Harald.

"Matters have gone far enough," he said. "If you suppose you will get anywhere by capturing Swain's sons you are very much mistaken. I tell you plainly that in so doing you would make me your enemy and most of the Orkney-folk as well."

"Yes," returned Jarl Harald defiantly, "you are a better friend to Swain than you are to me."

"Not so, Harald," answered the old Jarl kindly, "but I wish to be friend to both of you."

"You will make Swain as powerful as we are by such actions," warned Jarl Harald heatedly.

"It is impossible for me to do so," replied Jarl Rognvald, "because he is already as powerful as we two."

Jarl Harald laughed.

"You jest, cousin," he said. "We two hold the dominion of the Orkneys, and Swain is a fugitive, hunted from island to island."

"Only because it suits him for the present to live so," rejoined Jarl Rognvald. "Make no mistake about it—Swain is no mere outlaw to be harried at will."

"He is a trouble-maker who should be driven from the islands," answered Jarl Harald with another flash of temper.

"You are all wrong," said Jarl Rognvald, smiling. "I myself was wrong for a time also. There are really three Jarls in the Orkneys. And if Swain will be satisfied with the power without the title, for St. Olaf's sake do not balk him."

"What do you propose to do then?" asked Jarl Harald, half-convinced. "I still believe Swain should be punished, and——"

"It is no longer a question of punishment," interrupted Jarl Rognvald. "The islands have been so long distracted that men are unsettled. Here it is Eastertide. Spring is at hand. The planting will soon be attended to, and after that the young men will feel the roving spirit, and they will be stealing away to join Swain. My judgment is that we should make terms with him before that happens."

"It is easy enough for you to talk," retorted Jarl Harald. "But how will you induce Swain to come in, and what will you offer him?"

"I will send Bishop William, who is his cousin, to him and pledge him safety at our hands," answered Jarl Rognvald. "As to what to offer him, let us put off consideration of that until we hear what he has to say."

Jarl Harald agreed to this suggestion none too willingly, and Bishop William, who was now a very old man, went off with Erik to discover where Swain lay.

XVI

ERIK conducted Bishop William to Swain's cave in Hellisey, and the only question Swain asked of the Bishop was:

"Does Jarl Rognvald promise me safety?"

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"Yes," replied the Bishop.

"I will come," said Swain.

He took the Bishop and Erik aboard his longship, hoisted a peace-shield at the masthead and steered straight for Kirkiuvag. When they reached the town the Bishop escorted Swain up to the cathedral of St. Magnus, which Jarl Rognvald had built, and then went to Jarl Harald's skalli and fetched the Two Jarls to the church. No others were present although a crowd of people lingered outside waiting to hear what was decided.

When the Jarls entered the church Swain greeted Jarl Rognvald courteously, but Harald he ignored, and the young Jarl frowned in a way which boded ill for the success of their negotiations. Jarl Rognvald seized upon this point at once.

"How is it you will not speak to Jarl Harald, Swain?" he inquired.

"Because of the part he had in my mother's slaying," Swain answered frankly. "He who is friend to Olvir Rosta is an enemy to me and always will be."

Jarl Harald glared at Swain and shouted so loud his voice could be heard beyond the church walls:

"It is a lie that I had part in Asleif's slaying, nor am I friend to Olvir."

"That is good hearing," replied Swain; "but words require proof."

"I see no reason why I should prove my words for you, who are an outlaw," returned Jarl Harald.

And he started to walk out of the church. But Jarl Rognvald went after him and drew him back.

"Now it is for you to be reasonable, Swain," counseled Jarl Rognvald. "Listen to Jarl Harald before you reach a decision upon what he has to say."

"That is fair," agreed Swain. "I will listen."

So he heard Jarl Harald's story of how Olvir Rosta managed the raid upon Gairsey, and at the conclusion of it he said:

"I am satisfied Olvir made use of you without your knowledge, and it is to your credit that you dismissed Olvir afterward when you had need of his friendship and support."

Jarl Harald was mollified by this, and he growled good-temperedly:

"Since that misunderstanding is out of the way, what else have we to discuss?"

"I do not know," said Swain. "It was not I who called this meeting."

"It was I," said Jarl Rognvald. "And what I have to say is this. You are a man of property even as we are, Swain, and it does not consort with your interests to have the islands continually upset with fighting."

"That is what I have been trying to prevent for the last few years," commented Swain drily.

"No doubt," assented Jarl Rognvald hastily. "And we should be glad to have your help to the same purpose in the future."

"I will pay no fines, Lord Jarls," said Swain. "It is not my wish to open old sores, but I have nothing to be ashamed of to look back upon. What I have done I would do again if the need arose."

Jarl Harald muttered something under his breath, but Jarl Rognvald answered openly:

"Swain, I will say to you what I have never said to another man. I was wrong in my dealings with you. We were friends many years, and I should have heeded your advice against my Jorsala-faring. As for my leaving you and Erlend, I ask you to remember that if Erlend was your friend he was nevertheless not a fit person to rule here, and I did what I did because I distrusted him, acting as I deemed it for the best interests of the Orkney-folk."

"It was not honorable, that last deed of yours, Lord Jarl," said Swain bluntly.

"No," agreed Jarl Rognvald. "Perhaps it was not. But I ask you to remember Swain, that there is a very fine line between honor and dishonor, and it may be sometimes a man must act dishonorably for the advantage of other folk."

"I will leave that argument to the clerks to discuss," remarked Swain. "But I will admit that you have spoken honestly here, and that wipes from my mind the memory of the act you defend. Now what else, Lord Jarl?"

"Only this, Swain," replied Jarl Rognvald. "I wish you to judge leniently your troubles with Jarl Harald, inasmuch as it was my fault that he was left to rule by his lone, against the warning you gave me."

Swain held out his hand to Jarl Rognvald.

"I will handfast you on that, Lord Jarl," he said. "No fines, and the past to be buried."

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They clasped, and then Swain turned to Jarl Harald.

"Lord Jarl," he said, "there was a time when I looked upon you as a son. If I am not an old man I am still much older than you, and our enmity has been a source of very great sorrow to me. Will you handfast with me on the same terms as Jarl Rognvald?"

Jarl Harald hesitated a moment, while Swain's hand was outstretched. A conflict of passions, old memories, resentments, tore at his ugly face. His body shook with the intensity of his feeling. A stifled cry broke from his lips. Out went his hand.

"Swain," he said, "I have hated you. It may be I still hate you. I do not know. I would have compassed your death yesterday. Yet there is no man I would rather be friends with today."

"A brave enemy makes the best friend," rejoined Swain.

This was the end of the fighting and unrest which won Swain the title of Jarl-maker. Men said that he received more honor from it than the Two Jarls who actually defeated him, and it is certain that he was more highly regarded than ever and the skalds sang his praises at the courts of all the Northern Kings. His skalli was as crowded as those of the Jarls, and young men fought for the privilege of serving him. But Swain cared little for fame. He had two objects in life: to slay Olvir Rosta and to rear his sons to be mighty warriors. And to these objects he gave all of his attention.

AIN'T THAT OUR LUCK?

BY CLEMENTS RIPLEY

Author of "According to the Evidence," "Where the Trail Ended," etc.

NO, THAT ain't the Pelham I mean. That was Jimmie Pelham, him that went eight days A.W.O.L. in Old Mexico and come out with twelve hundred dollars in gold and the *jefe pollitico's* ear in his pocket. This here was another Pelham.

This here was Preston Pelham, him that I served under in the P. I. "Bootjack" Pelham we used to call him, on account he wore a pair of yellow boots that it took half the battery to get off him as regular as night come. You wouldn't know him. He retired before you wise johns had learned squads right.

Out in the Islands it was, and me on my second hitch and a private still. In them days a guy was a recruit until he'd put in two hitches. Yeah, they didn't make a corporal then out of any bird that could blow his own nose.

Bootjack, he was a second lieutenant when I come to the battery. One of them earnest, hard working ones, he was, with his head jam full of the regulations and the good of the service. When you get a shavetail like that, look out for something to happen. It ain't in nature for a shavetail to be earnest. They'd oughtn't to let them birds think.

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This Bootjack, he was always thinking. For one thing, he thought how he could improve the mess, which he done by cutting out the beef and bacon and feeding rice.

"It's the proper and natural food for this climate," he says. "Look at the Japanese," he says, talking slow and serious.

So rice it was, until the battery was talking about mutiny, and the mess sergeant went A.W.O.L., because, like he said later at his trial, he was afraid the boys would kill him.

Then he thought of a new way to keep the mess accounts, and that like to got him a general court when the inspector come around.

Yeah, he was always thinking. I can see him yet, with his long legs in them tight yellow boots, which he wore because he thought he'd ought to set a snappy example to the men, and that long nose of his sticking out of his face like the beak on a crow. There wasn't no tortoise-shell cheaters in them days, but if there was he'd have had 'em.

You'd see him of an afternoon, when the battery commander and the rest of the officers was asleep in their quarters or over to the club, signing bar checks, wandering around the battery, kinda pecking that long nose of his at one thing and another, looking for something that could maybe be improved.

Yeah, most of the boys thought he was a nut, but he was a good guy, and they liked him. He meant well, I'll say that for him, like the time he rubbed kerosene on the mules to cure lice, and all the hair come off two days before a review.

Mules? Sure. This was a jackass outfit; mountain guns. Little old three-inch stuff, they was, that would stand straight up on their tails when you fired 'em, and the gun-crew would grab 'em and wrastle 'em, and throw 'em down on the ground and fire again.

And them gun-crews! Big, long-legged, slab-sided, ornery birds from away up in the North Carolina mountains, that would slap your teeth down your throat as soon as look at you. Hard-boiled! Huh, you could smack one of them babies acrosst the map with an ax, and not dent nothing but the ax. Some of you johns might remember the time they started to clean the Marines outa Corpus Christi——.

Yeah, I reckon they got that way leading them jugheads around the scenery, and mostly coming into camp about three jumps ahead of the cavalry. They was the real stuff, them boys was. You'd ought to try a hitch with 'em, some of you johns that think you're field artillerymen. They'd make a soldier or a corpse out of a man in about three weeks, and it wouldn't make a —— bit of difference to 'em which. That outfit——

But I started in to tell you about Bootjack.

We was in barracks again, resting up after the Samar campaign, when the news come through that three of the chief Dattos—which is a Filippino officer, and a sort of a cross between a top sergeant and a division commander—had broke loose and skun over to one of them smaller islands. These bozos was primed for trouble, and they was self-starting. They was stirring things up and raising ——, and the friendly population, what was left of it, had took to the brush and was squatting under a tree somewheres, eating what blew down.

Naturally we looked for what come off. That night at retreat they read out the order that our outfit, being the pick of the service, was to chase over and abolish them Dattos. No, the order didn't say we was the pick of the service. There wasn't no need to. We knew it.

Along with us they was sending a squadron of dismounted cavalry, although —— knows what for. I never could see no use in no cavalryman whatever, myself.

Well, anyways, these here yellow-legs was to go along. Probably they couldn't stand 'em around the post no longer. Their C. O. was senior to ours too, being a major; a little fat, grizzle-whiskered man, who'd roll around in his saddle like a sack of oats. Yeah, but he'd stay in that saddle no matter what was under it, I'll say that for him. Him being senior to our C. O. he had command of the expedition. Yeah, headquarters will get careless and make a mistake like that once in a while.

As it happened, our battery commander was away on leave when the orders come, and, just like the standing luck of the field artillery, our senior lieutenant come down with fever the day we was due to start. Ain't that the way with the field artillery? Every rotten post in peace time —— yeah, and us the cream of the service, too.

Well, our senior lieutenant, he come out

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to final inspection the last day, shaking the filling out of his teeth with chill, and letting on like he was never better in his life, and all of a sudden he done a flop on his face, just in front of the second section, and they carried him off on a stretcher.

So who did that leave in command but Bootjack, with them yellow boots of his knocking together at the knees for fear they'd shove somebody in over him, and that long nose of his poking and pecking into everything to see could he find a better way of doing it.

But they left him in command, and the cavalry major, he says, "——," he says, "Do you mean to tell me they've turned Preston Pelham loose on the face of the earth in charge of a whole battery?"

Yeah, our senior chief of section heard him say it, and that afternoon he took their squadron sergeant major out behind the picket line and like to beat the head off him.

We seen him that night when we went aboard ship, with his face in a sling. It done the battery more good than their rations, although —— knows the rations done little enough that two days at sea.

Them two days was the worst yet, with the ship bucking and pitching the way you couldn't do nothing at all but lay close to the rail and wish you was just having your leg cut off, or something like that. There was only one thing saved most of the boys from dying at that, and that was because they was bound they'd live long enough to get them navy gobs off the ship and on to dry land for a quarter of an hour. We dared 'em to come ashore when the ship docked, but they never come.

It might be it was just as good at that, because we had our hands full that night. Them Dattos musta had a sign hung up somewheres saying "Do it now."

IT HAD turned dark good by the time we'd made camp, the cavalry getting the shady part under the trees, like always, and us out in the heat of the sun. We'd just got settled down for the night when the trouble started.

It was "Red" Milligan started it, him that was killed in 1916 at Carrizal. He was on outpost—a Cossack post they called it then. Four men and a non-com.

Red took a shot at what he thought was one of them wild Filipino pigs, and like it turned out, it was a Moro, with a foot and a half of *bolo* in his hand. Yeah, they'd sneak up on all fours like that after dark, and *bolo* a sentry before he knew there was anything there. Just back of the ear. Red got him. A good shot.

The next second the woods was full of it. It was just like Red's shot had touched off a million packs of fire-crackers all at once. That pitch-black brush on three sides of us was just one steady spit and crackle, flashing through the dark, and from the noise you'd have thought there was anyways a division out there.

Over to our left you could hear the whistles, where the cavalry was deploying on the double, cursing and damning and stumbling around among them shade-trees they'd picked out for their camp-site, and all the while there was that steady flash and crackle from the woods. Once in a while you'd hear a home made slug chunk into the forage we'd piled on our right to protect the jugheads, but there ain't nothing stops a bullet like a bale of hay, and anyways the fire was too high to do us any real hurt.

Naturally we was double-timing to our posts at the guns before Bootjack had time to blow his whistle. By the time we'd got the guns in battery the cavalry had finished their deployment, and was advancing, open order, into the brush. They opened up a minute later, and I'll say this for them yellow-legs, it was pretty to see how even their fire would ripple from one end to the other of their lines.

Bootjack, he was around everywhere, cool as you please, pecking around in the dark like an old crow, seeing that everything was in order. I had to laugh to see him. Them babies didn't need no looking after. They'd have done it on their heads, dark or no dark. But I was hoping he wouldn't spring no improvements until after the excitement was over.

The firing was getting hotter every second, though not doing no harm, being still too high, but all of a sudden one of the jugs on the picket-line rared up and fell over backwards with a slug smack through his head.

"——, fellers it's old Molly," sings out a picket-line guard.

Molly was the first section gun mule, a big brown —— that would trot up to you in the corral and bite the buttons off your pockets looking for sugar.

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I could hear the first section talking it over in the dark. The things them hard-boiled birds would call each other in barracks, being friendly like, would turn your hair gray, but that night there was fancy touches added to it. Yeah, them boys had the gift of language.

The senior chief of section bust out crying. I could hear him. He'd broke Molly when she was a colt.

Right then Bootjack began talking to himself. His post was right back of me, and I could hear him plain.

"Can't have this," he says, short and grunting. "Can't have this at all. Best mule in the battery," he says.

Then he was quiet for a minute, and you could pretty near hear his brains go round. Then—

"Got no orders to fire," he says, slow and earnest, "but then," he says, "I've got no orders not to fire."

"Cheese!" I whispers to the gunner. "Get set. We're on our way."

"—— well time," he comes back. "How long do them yellow-legs think they're going to hog the whole show?"

"Quit that talking in the second section," Bootjack snaps. "Range six hundred. Fire at will."

Hot dog, boy, we poured it in 'em then! You could hear the breech-blocks snap shut the first time, and after that it was just one steady flash and roar, and we panted and we sweated, and the little guns stood up on their tails, and we wrastled 'em and throwed 'em down and fired again.

It lasted maybe ten minutes, and then the rifle fire out in front of us quit just as sudden as it had started.

"Range seven hundred," yells Bootjack. "We've got 'em on the run—Range eight hundred."

And right then it happened.

First we knowed there was a yell from the picket-line guard, and then they was right on top of us. They come over our forage pile and they come around the ends of the battery and they come from everywhere, a-yelling and a-hollering and a-swarming over us.

I grabbed up a spanner wrench and slammed the first head I seen, and I didn't even get to see what become of him, for that second about six of 'em jumped me to once, and I went down under the mess of 'em. The last thing I remember is getting one foot loose and kicking a guy in the belly, and the next thing is laying under the gun and hearing whistles going in all directions.

It was our number one dragged me out by the feet, me not being hurt barring a jolt back of the ear that had knocked me cold.

"Holy Mackerel," I says. "What happened?"

"We was rushed," he says, "in the dark."

"Don't try to kid me," I tells him, sarcastic.

"I'm not," he says, serious. "It was them —— cavalry."

"Forget it, you big john recruit," I answers. "Them Moros ain't got no cavalry. They got too much sense."

"It was our own cavalry."

"Judas priest," I says. "What for?"

"Search me. But we'll find out in the morning," he says, "and anyways we'll go over and knock 'em for a shipload of liniment."

But in the morning we was all confined to our area by orders, and so was the yellow-legs to theirs.

At eight o'clock come the order for Bootjack to report to the camp commander, and I was detailed to go with him as orderly. My chief of section come to me, and says he:

"I'll spot you two months' pay," he says, "if you'll report sick and let me detail myself in your place."

'Chase yourself," I says. "I wouldn't miss this for six months' pay and your stripes."

"I'll get you detailed on K.P. for the next six months," he says, ugly and threatening.

"Have a good time," I tells him. "I'm going with the lieutenant."

And come to find out I was wise.

The cavalry major was setting under the fly of his tent with a bandaged head. He jumped clear out of his chair when he seen us coming, and his chin whiskers stuck straight out.

"What's the matter with you?" he yells when we was still forty paces away. "What excuse have you got? You and that —— battery of yours——"

"Sir," begins Bootjack, dignified, "the battery I have the honor to command——"

But the little, fat major was so mad he couldn't stay on the ground at all.

"Battery!" he yells. "Battery! Gang of

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outlaws. Bunch of second story workers. I know 'em, —— 'em, I know 'em."

"Sir," says Bootjack again.

But the major wouldn't let nobody else talk at all.

"Look what they did to me," he hollers, dancing up and down and pointing to his head. "Look what that gang of thugs did. Assault with intent to kill—attempted murder of an officer. Look at it."

Personally, knowing what a clout I handed out with that spanner wrench the night before I didn't blame him none. Howsoever, it wasn't for me to say nothing about that. Still and all, it was something to know who I'd landed on, and my chances of hitting majors wasn't what you'd call frequent.

All the time Bootjack was standing at attention, but he was getting redder and redder, and his fingers was beginning to twitch.

"Sir," he says, "if I may bring it to your attention, your men made an entirely unexpected and unprovoked attack on mine last night."

The major looked at him like his eyes would pop out of his head, and his chin whiskers begun to wiggle up and down.

"Unprovoked," he hollers all of a sudden. "Unprovoked! My ——, young man, your —— battery shelled us for a quarter of an hour."

If such was the case you can't hardly wonder at him being provoked, but Bootjack looked at him kinda dazed.

"Shelled you?" he repeats, sorta wondering. "Why that couldn't be."

"Couldn't be? Don't tell me it couldn't be, young man. Are you trying to tell me I don't know when I'm being shelled?"

"No, sir," says Bootjack, earnest and serious, "but——"

"Great snakes!" yells the major. "There ain't no 'but.' We'd just got the Moros well in hand and their attack stopped when that lunatic asylum you run opened up on us with shrapnel."

Then I begun to see why them cavalry was so sore when they jumped us last night. Ain't that just like a cavalryman to be right where the artillery's fixing to shell, and then blame it on the artillery?

But Bootjack, he still stuck to his point, earnest and serious.

"Did you have any casualties, sir?" he asks politely.

"No thanks to you," says the Major, "we didn't. The attack had been stopped, and we hunted cover."

"Then," says Bootjack, kinda triumphant, "it wasn't my battery shelled you. When my battery shells anything, they destroys it."

"——," gasps the Major, and sits down sudden on the edge of his bunk. "——."

"It was the shells going over your head that you heard," Bootjack explains kindly. "We shelled out the enemy. It's nervous work advancing under artillery support, sir," he says, "and it's not surprizing that you made the error of thinking——"

"Error," yells the major, "Error! Why you young pup I was fighting Indians before you was weaned."

"Yes, sir," says Bootjack, respectfully, "but in them times you didn't have the efficient artillery support that you have now."

The major looked at him kinda pop-eyed.

"Well," he says, "if what we had last night was artillery support I'd take my chances with the Moros any day.

"Young man," he goes on, "you're wasted in the field. You ought to be on the strategy board, explaining to them birds what a fool Napoleon was."

"But Napoleon wasn't a fool," says Bootjack, still respectful. "He was an artilleryman, sir."

That was a hot one, and it was news to me too. I'd always thought Napoleon was one of them French kings. I guess the major had thought so too, because he just kinda goggled at Bootjack and wabbled his chin whiskers like he didn't have no comeback.

"Well," he says finally, "I'll thank you to do just one thing, and that is keep that gang of outlaws of yours away from me and my men. Just understand that I don't want no more artillery support whatever," he says. "And if you fire at anything more without actually seeing plainly what it is I'll court-martial you."

Naturally when we got back to our area the gang was raring to know what come off.

"It's them cavalry," I says. "They claim we shot into 'em last night."

"Well did we?" they asks.

"They was in a position to know," I tells 'em.

"Did we kill any of 'em?" asks the top sergeant.

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"No," I says, "and Bootjack he claims that that shows we never fired into 'em. But I'm inclined to think," I says, "that it's just because the artillery don't never have no luck."

"Killing a cavalryman ain't luck," says the top, "it's good judgment. Wait till next time," he says.

"Huh," I comes back. "There ain't going to be no next time. The major says we're a bunch of slum-slinging Jesse Jameses, and can't play with his little boys no more."

Well, some of 'em was for waiting until night, but the most wanted to step right over and run them cavalry out into the Pacific. But there was nothing come of it, us being confined to our area by orders.

IT WAS like that for the next week, us getting more and more peevish, and the whole campaign looking more and more like a total loss so far as we was concerned. We didn't have no more war than a fish has got feet. We was made permanent camp guards, while the cavalry went chasing them Moros the length and breadth of the island. The Moros not being tied to the ground, naturally they didn't catch none, but it would make you sick to see them yellow-legs disfiguring up the scenery, making a regular war out of a little clean-up job that the artillery could have done in three days at most if let.

It had the boys plumb wore out to watch it, and by the end of the week it looked like, orders or no orders, they would go over to the cavalry area and create some handsome yellow-legged corpses if things didn't loosen up pretty soon.

But if seeing them cavalry mess our job all up made the men jumpy, you'd ought to have seen what it done to Bootjack. He didn't hardly seem to take no interest in nothing no more. Where you'd be used to seeing him pecking and poking around the battery, looking for something to improve, he'd just come out now for stables and routine work, and then go back and lay on his bunk. It got so the boys would have been glad to have him pull any nut stunt, just to show he was feeling natural again. Like I said, they liked him, and besides, there ain't nothing makes an outfit feel worse than to have the Old Man act like he was cuckoo, especially in enemy country.

So things got bad, and we got to grouching and bellyaching, instead of settling our troubles decent and Christian, out behind the picket-lines, and them cavalry swelled around more and more disgusting, like they owned the whole campaign.

Ain't that just like them cavalry? Yeah, and up to date they hadn't got nothing done a-tall. Further and more it looked like that wasn't only fifty per cent. of it. They wasn't never going to.

Probably the Moros was getting sick of it too, because about that time they made another night attack. It didn't amount to much this time, being just a little firing from the edge of the woods that done no harm but to bust up a night's rest. Still an' all, it was disgusting to have to stand by the guns and do nothing whiles the cavalry got all the cream of it, like the feller says. We didn't dast to do no firing unless we could see plain what we was shooting at, and it was pitch dark.

Bootjack was standing just back of the battery and talking kinda low and nervous to the top sergeant.

"If we could only see 'em!" he says. "Can't you see 'em a-tall, sergeant?"

"No sir," says the top, kinda wishful, "but I 'most can, and I can tell from the flashes right where they are. I could drop a dozen rounds right in amongst 'em, sir."

"No-o," Bootjack tells him, after thinking it over, "no-o it won't do. The cavalry's out in front. They'd claim we fired into 'em, the way they did the last time."

"Sir," says the top, disgusted, "them cavalry makes me sick, if you'll pardon my saying so, sir. I wouldn't give thirty cents for the lot of 'em."

"You ain't got a thing on me," come back Bootjack, "only twenty-nine cents."

It showed how far things had went, him making a crack like that to an enlisted man. Yeah, it took a good deal in them days to make an officer say a remark to the prejudice of good order and military discipline, like the court martial says.

About this time the firing began to slack away, like the Moros seen they wasn't getting no good out of it, and only done it in the first place for pastimes and to keep their hand in. And meanwhiles we hadn't fired a shot. The men was more rank disgusted than ever.

Then all of a sudden I heard something that sounded like angels talking. Of course

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it wasn't no angels, but it was Bootjack, and what sounded so good was that his voice wasn't sick and nervous, like before, but slow and earnest, and by that I known that finally and at last he had snapped out of it and was thinking of some improvement.

"Hey, fellers, give a listen," I yells, before I known what I was doing.

But Bootjack was so took up with what he was saying that he never paid no notice.

"We can't see 'em," he says, slow and serious, "and so we can't fire."

"Yes, sir," butts in the top, and I could tell by the tremble of his voice that he'd noticed what I had.

"What we need," says Bootjack, "is a searchlight."

The whole battery heard it.

Being at the guns they couldn't make no noise, but believe it or not, there was a silent yell went up that you could feel even if you couldn't hear.

Well, sir, you wouldn't have known us for the same outfit next day. Bootjack, he'd sat up all night designing a rigging for the searchlight, and at the crack of dawn he had the saddler and the chief mechanic out and busy on it. All day long the boys was making excuses to stop in at the mechanic's tent and see how he was coming. Anything the saddler wanted we'd dig up for him, and he was hard at it, cutting and stitching away as if his life depended on it. You see, the saddle and the rigging was the important part, because any searchlight we used would have to be carried on a mule. There's more to designing and building a pack-saddle that won't sore up a jughead's back than you'd think.

The saddle and rigging was finished up in two days, and then the battery like to went crazy waiting for the searchlight to come, from Manila. Still there wasn't nothing to do but set still and wait, and pray that them navy gobs wouldn't smash it up nor nothing on the *en route*.

We had to keep it all dead quiet, too, us being afraid that if the cavalry major was to hear of it he'd crab the act some way. Them orders not to fire unless we seen the enemy plain was getting under our skins something awful, but we figured that the next time they come we'd see 'em, and we didn't aim to be interfered with by no yellow-legs.

So when the boat finally come in with our supplies, a week later, and I was detailed to get the searchlight up to camp, I went out and found me a friendly Filipino.

"*Hombre*," I says, "*Arriva*," for I could talk Spanish good in them days. I've got kinda rusty on it since, but I talked what they call pure Castile then. A woman in Manila taught it to me, and she said it was pure Castile. It's the best kind.

This bird *arrivaed* and I says to him,

"When it's two o'clock, ding-ding," I says. "You get your bull cart, moo-moo," I says, "and go down to the dock, where the *aguas* at, and get a big box, *casa grande*, for Lieutenant Pelham, and bring it up here, *muy pronto*. *Sabe?*" I says.

"Sure," he says, and grins; that being the only American them gu-gus knows.

Sure enough, about the middle of the afternoon up come the bull cart with the searchlight. We took it to the mechanic's tent and unpacked it, and believe me, there wasn't a guy in the battery didn't find some excuse for being around when it come out of the box. And when Bootjack, who was fussing around with all the little do-dads that went with it, as nervous as a cat, finally straightened up and says, "It's all here, complete," you'd have thought he'd announced an extra pay-day from the way they acted.

It took the chief mechanic the rest of the afternoon to get it mounted up on the saddle and rigging he'd fixed for it, Bootjack walking round and round it in circles, pecking and poking that long nose of his into everything. It was no wonder at that, when the outfit had set him back about three months' pay.

It seemed like that was the longest afternoon I ever put in. I never knew the sun to take so long going down, and from sundown to good dark seemed about ten years.

Finally and at last it come, pitch black, without no sign of a moon. Bootjack had called for a detail to try the thing out, and for once I had some luck and was named to go on it.

WE PACKED the searchlight on a second section mule, a big black jug-head he was, named Ethel. He didn't make no trouble about carrying it, contrarious to expectations, for most generally a mule don't like carrying a new rig of any sort.

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We snuck out of camp on the Q. T., so as not to let them cavalry get wise, not wanting them to know nothing about it until we sprang it on them at the next night attack. Bootjack and the top had picked 'em a place to try it out about three miles from camp, where they figured the beam couldn't be seen from no distance so long as it wasn't throwed straight into the air.

There was Bootjack and the top in front. Then come "Slim" McAllister, a long-legged, redheaded Scotchman from somewheres down in North Carolina. He was leading Ethel, who was his regular mule; him being a second section driver. At the last come me and the chief of the second section.

We didn't have no trouble getting past the sentries, them being our own outfit, and prepared to let us drive a freight train through the lines that night if we'd a-wanted to. It took us about an hour to get to where we was going. Then Bootjack halted us, and we got ready for business.

Bootjack and the top, they fiddled round with the workings of the light for a few minutes. Then, when everything was set, Bootjack explained to McAllister what he wanted him to do.

"You mount the mule," he says, "behind the saddle, and turn this key. That turns the light on."

Slim sounded kinda nervous in the dark.

"Me mount up on Ethel, sir?" he asks, swallering, "Behind that thing?"

"Certainly," says Bootjack. "The only way to operate this light is from the mule's back. You're not afraid, are you?"

"No, sir," snaps Slim. "All the same," he says, mounting up, cautious, "I ain't hardly used to riding on the hurricane deck of a jackass."

I could tell from the way Ethel kinda planted his feet and looked around that he wasn't noways crazy about it neither. But Slim wrapped the lead rope around his wrist and clumb aboard, and Ethel acted pretty good, not doing no more than to reach around and try to bite a hunk outa Slim's leg.

"All right," says Bootjack, who had been pecking and poking at the workings of the machine, "turn it on."

Slim he turned the key—click.

Gosh Almighty! I don't reckon there ever was a more successful searchlight than what that one was. It shot a beam you could read a guy's mind by, straight out between the jug's ears.

Ethel kinda drew together, slow and stiff, and his ears went forward with a snap you could hear. Then, boy howdy, he uncoiled just like a spring, and went away from there.

Slim being tied to Ethel by the lead rope, he naturally went too. Sometimes you'd hear a thud. That was Slim hitting the ground. Most times, from his own say so, when we picked him up after the rope broke, he sailed straight out behind, like a flag. All the time you could hear his comments, which was awful.

Ethel didn't take him more than maybe a hundred yards before the rope broke, but what he done to him in that distance was terrible. He looked like he'd been gone over with a lawn-mower.

But that wasn't the worst of it by no means. A guy that could think of the things to say that Slim was saying wasn't in no serious danger, but Gosh Almighty, there was our searchlight, that we'd set so much store by, charging 'round the island on the back of a crazy jug-head. Can you beat it? That's the luck of the artillery all over.

It wasn't no use to try to head Ethel off. There was nothing to do but just stand there and watch it. The searchlight, like I said, was one of the best, and the saddle and rigging was built to stay. We'd see that beam go swinging acrost the sky. Then for maybe three or four minutes we wouldn't see it, and then, zip, it would shoot up again, a long ways from where we seen it the last time, looking like a comet that had gone nuts.

Bootjack, he didn't say nothing; just watched that light, with his shoulders humped up to his ears and his arms folded. Three months' pay loose on the back of a jug-head that didn't know enough to be half-witted. Finally and at last he turned back toward camp, following with Slim McAllister, without a word.

There wasn't no need to tell the battery what had happened. Every last one had seen that shaft of light walloping around the island, and it hadn't took 'em long to dope out the answer. The cavalry not having been in on it, and not having no surplus brains to dope it out with, they was pop-eyed with excitement. We didn't enlighten 'em none.

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THE NEXT morning, after the cavalry had started out on their regular *pasear*, leaving us for camp guards, like always, Bootjack he turned out everybody that wasn't on duty, and headed a party to hunt for Ethel.

There was our searchlight, for one thing, and for another there was Ethel himself. After what Bootjack had already spent it looked like it wouldn't be no amusement a-tall for him to have a big, black, government mule go galloping acrosst his pay check.

You'd have thought Ethel would have headed back sooner or later to our picket-line, but I guess that stuff on his back had him too scared to use what sense a jug'd got. Anyways we hunted for him all morning, sweating through the brush, and trying to figure out whereabouts we'd go if we didn't have no more brains than a mule! Finally about noon we set down to rest in a little clearing we found.

"Think like a mule," says the top. "Try to figure where you'd go if you was one."

"I can't do it myself," I says, "but if you'd told me that before we started I'd 'a' had one of them cavalry to come along. They can't think no other way," I says.

I hadn't no more than got them words outa my mouth when something grabbed me by the neck and jerked me flat on my back. And then it seemed like it rained Moros.

Gosh, it seemed like they came from everywhere. There wasn't no fight; they just swarmed over us. In all I don't guess it lasted over ten seconds, and by that time every one of us was flat on our backs, with about six of 'em holding us down. There wasn't even time to be surprized. There we was, just laying there and wondering what was going to happen.

Right away it begun happening. First they rolled us over and tied our hands behind us, and I'll say for 'em they done a good job. Did you ever try to tie a guy's hands? Well believe it or not, there's a lot more trick to it than you'd think.

Then they got us on our feet, and started the whole show off through the jungle. I'll tell the world I've took pleasanter walks than that one. They didn't rough us up none, but that just give us more time to figure out what was going to happen when we got where we was going to.

Yeah, they had right unpleasant ways, them Moros. They'd maybe bury a guy, all except his head. I've saw 'em like that two-three times—what them big ants had left of 'em. And they'd do other things, worse. I don't guess nobody got much fun out of that walk—not if they felt like I did anyways.

Finally and at last we come out into a little clearing, which musta been their permanent camp, except that from what I seen there wasn't nothing permanent about them Moros no time. It wasn't much to look at; two-three *nipa* shacks and a pile of ashes where they had done their cooking—or something. And that something bothered me considerable.

Still and all, there it was—their regular hangout, which the cavalry had been looking for for three weeks, and the artillery had found in six hours. That's the way it goes, like always.

There wasn't nobody there but the regular guard when we come in, but about sundown the place begun to fill up. They'd shoved us all into one of the *nipa* shacks, with a guard at the door, so we couldn't see what was going on. But we could hear one gang after another of 'em coming into camp and being told the big news about us.

Bootjack, he had the language down fine, and he'd tell us what they'd say. Me? My Spanish is pure Castile, like I told you, and these bozos talked a kinda home-made language of their own. Besides, while I could talk pretty good I never took the trouble to get so I could understand much when they talked it, them not ever saying nothing much worth listening to.

Every time a new gang come in they'd have to come to the door of our shack and give us the once over, and then they'd talk and jabber and holler until another gang come. No discipline at all they hadn't.

"Can you make out what they're fixing to do with us, sir?" asks the top sergeant, kinda worried and nervous.

Believe me, we pinned back our ears to get the dope on that one.

"Not exactly," says the lieutenant, wrinkling up his forehead. "They're waiting for the head Datto. He's still out with a raiding-party, but they expect him back any minute. They're excited and worried about something, but I can't make out just what it is."

"Well, whatever it is that's bothering 'em, I'll bet it ain't them cavalry," says the top

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sarcastic. "Them birds wouldn't excite a female cemetery."

"I wish they'd get a hustle on 'em and get us outa here," says somebody. "It looks like it's the only chance we got, and a mighty slim one."

But the lieutenant snaps him short.

"A field artilleryman gets out of his own troubles if he's any good," he barks. "You're a long way from dead yet. Remember that."

Some way hearing him talk like that kinda put more pep in us all. He was in just as bad as us, but if he still had his nerve with him why wouldn't we?

Somebody over in the corner began humming—

"Artillery, artillery, with the dirt behind their ears."

And I don't know how it come about, but the next second we was all hollering it. The way we come down on them last two lines—

"The infantry and the cavalry and the —— ——
engineers
They could never be artillery in a hundred
thousand years."

It like to lifted the roof off the shack.

We sung it twice, and the guard come and told us to shut up.

"Go to ——," says Bootjack, and we started in on,

"He may be a brother of William H. Taft
But he ain't no friend of mine."

We sung "Hot Time," and we sung "The Rolling Caisson," and we was still singing when the head Datto come into camp and they sent for us to interview him.

It was good dark by that time, but you could see pretty good by the fire-light. They led us across to one of the other *nipa* shacks.

The head Datto was setting on the ground outside the door, with the other two Dattos, one on each side of him. They was chewing betel-nut and jabbering away excited-like, which they quit when we come up to 'em. It would make you laugh to see the three of 'em setting there so dignified, in khaki officers' blouses, and not a pair of pants to the lot.

Yeah, I claim nobody ain't fit for self government until you can anyways get pants on to him.

He was an ugly looking bird, that head Datto, and from what I could get he talked ugly too, although I couldn't get so much.

So I don't know what he said to Bootjack, nor what Bootjack said to him, but all of a sudden he looked mad enough to bite nails in two, and got up slow and walked over to where the lieutenant was standing with his hands still tied behind him.

Then he swung one hand back, taking his time about it, and walloped the lieutenant acrosst the face.

The top was standing nearest, and if his hands was tied there wasn't no strings on his feet. He hauled off and booted that Datto in the belly, so that he just doubled up like a folding rule and went "Whe-e-e," and wasn't interested in nothing no more.

You know how it is sometimes in a dream—things take about a second and you feel like they took a million years? I seen that gang start for us, I seen the air full of *bolos*, and then, *zam*, like that, everything stopped dead still, like a movie when the machine breaks down. In a split second there wasn't no Moros, there wasn't no *bolos*, there wasn't nothing but just us, goggling and blinking in a glare of white light.

"——, fellers, it's Ethel," sings out the top.

Like I said, that was some searchlight, and further and more, if I ever get to heaven, which is likely, me being a good artilleryman, I'll have a word to say for the chief mechanic that made that rigging. He made it to stay.

And that jug-head! There he stood, back in the fringe of trees, with his ears stuck forward kinda inquiring, like he was waiting for an invitation to the party.

"Well, sir," says the top, kinda dazed and foolish, blinking in the light, "there's our mule. Shall we take him back to camp, sir?"

"Yes," says Bootjack, "or—no. Wait," he says, slow and serious, like he always talked when he had an idea, "I think we can improve on that."

Discipline or no discipline, I couldn't help it. I bust out laughing and the rest of the boys screeched and howled, and we had regular hystericals all over the place. It just struck us funny all at once, Bootjack thinking of improvements at a time like that.

But nothing never made no difference to

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Bootjack when he had an improvement in him.

"Wait," he says again, when we got calmed down to where he could hear himself speak.

Then he calls out something in Spanish.

There wasn't no answer, and I figured from the rate them Moros was traveling when I last seen 'em that there wouldn't be, they having probably run clear off the island by now.

But after he'd called a coupla more times there come an answer, kinda scared and quavery, from out in the brush.

Then he got busy and made 'em a regular speech. And when he got through, one of 'em answered, still sounding like he was scared to death.

"The evil eye," says Bootjack. "They've never seen a searchlight before, and it's frightened them out of their senses. They say it was loose all over the island last night, hunting for 'em, and now it's found 'em and come right into their camp after 'em. They're afraid to come out here."

"They can stay that way as far as I'm concerned, sir," says the top. "Let's get back to camp while we can."

"No, no," says Bootjack impatient, shaking his head like there was a fly in his ear. "You've no idea how frightened they are. Do you want to miss this chance and let the cavalry get them after all?"

"No, sir," says the top. "We're with you, sir."

Bootjack handed them another long work in Spanish, and they come back with another earful.

"They won't come out as long as the light is turned on them," he says.

"'Tention," barks the top, sudden. "To the rear—march!"

Ethel had been with the battery almost as long as anybody could remember, and you've seen how them mules, and even old battery horses will pick up the drill by themselves.

Ethel done a right about as neat as you please, and the light swung a half-circle and headed away from us.

One by one, as Bootjack talked to 'em they began to slide out of the sticks and throw themselves flat on their faces at his feet. The first ones that come, he made 'em untie our hands. Gradually they begun to come faster.

"Get 'em up on their feet," says the lieutenant, when it looked like they was all there. "Quick, for ——'s sake. I can hold 'em while the light burns, but it's beginning to dim."

We didn't waste no time. These birds didn't *sabe* pure Castile, but you can interpret good with a G. I. boot. We formed 'em in column of squads, and made a pile of their *bolos* and rifles, which we left. We took our own revolvers, which they had took away from us previous.

"Forward—march!" snaps Bootjack, us interpreting as before, and the whole show moved off, Ethel in the lead.

It was pretty near dawn when we marched 'em in and halted 'em in front of the calvary major's tent.

"Sir," says Bootjack, "I have the honor to report the capture of the entire forces of the enemy, by a portion of the artillery command."

The Major rubbed his eyes and wabbled his chin whiskers, like he was seeing things and wasn't sure was they really there.

Then, "——," he says, and went back into his tent again, like he was sure they was really there and didn't want to see 'em no more.

We turned 'em over to the cavalry, which we figured was probably capable to guard 'em, now that we had caught 'em, and went on back to our area.

The last thing I heard, just before I went to sleep, was Bootjack. It seems he'd found a saddle sore on Ethel, but, like he was telling the saddler, he'd thought of a way to improve the saddle so it wouldn't do it no more.

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The HELMSMEN of the HARPER

BY BILL ADAMS

Author of "The Petrels," "The Lure," etc.

TWO loafers stood at a corner of Front Street beside the 'Frisco waterfront. A young man walking toward Market Street passed by, and both looked furtively at him.

One, a slouching fellow, winked to his companion.

"That's 'im," he muttered.

" 'E's a bit of a fighter," he added; knocking out the ashes of his pipe against the corner lamp-post.

"He'll need be a fighter if he butts in around here," replied the other.

" 'E threw Albino down the Mission steps yesterday," said the first speaker.

"Albino only fights with his tongue," retorted the other.

The swinging doors of the building beside them flew open, and a man, stepping out, looked up and down the street.

" 'Ello, 'Squinters!' They 'aven't beat you up yet, 'ave they?" asked one of the loafers.

"Wot you mean? Beat up! Tha'sa good one!" said the newcomer and spat derisively upon the sidewalk.

" 'Ow's Albino?" asked the loafer.

"Albino's a fool," said the newcomer; then, pointing to a ship at anchor in the bay, added:

"See de sheep? Ve take 'eem de sailor."

He crossed the street to the landing-steps and, stepping into one of two boats that were moored there, looked to see that oars and boat-hooks were in place.

A second man stepped out to the street.

"Hello, Albino! Been to the Mission any more?" asked one of the loafers.

The man addressed, making no reply, crossed the street and looked down into the boats.

"A'ready, Squints?" he asked.

"You ——!" growled the other, looking up, using a foul name. "You gets killed if you don't quit to call me that."

He ascended the steps, and they returned together to the house whence they had come.

"I'm movin' on," said one of the loafers, "W'en Squinters and Albino are together 'tain't apt to be 'ealthy."

Accompanied by his companion, he strolled off up the street.

The men who now returned from the landing-steps were a strange pair.

One was a stocky fellow of prodigious width, his stature so short as to be well-nigh dwarfish. His limbs were short, in keeping with the shortness of his body. His feet and hands were immense and while out of all proportion to his legs and arms were well in keeping with his large head, which was covered with a mop of curly hair, black as the midnight. Judged by his dark skin he might have been a Spaniard, an Italian or Levanter.

Upon his upper limbs was a dull-brown undershirt of heavy wool, its sleeves, cut short above the elbow, exposing muscular and hairy forearms. His trousers were of

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faded blue cloth, much soiled and turned up above his ankles. Upon his feet were coarse blucher boots such as sailors wear at sea.

A fellow of extraordinary appearance when seen from any aspect, when met face to face he appeared well-nigh devilish; for from beneath his heavy brows there stared two bulging eyes that squinted horribly, seeming while looking everywhere to look nowhere; while seeing nothing yet to see everything. His large mouth was thick-lipped above a stubble-covered chin. When he laughed, as he not infrequently did, his eyes shone brightly. At other times they wore a cold, dead look, expressionless and mute.

His companion was a lank-limbed fellow whose appearance in any place other than a sea-port waterfront might have caused the populace to turn and stare. His thin arms dangled from sloping shoulders; his slender body was well above the middle height. He wore a close-fitting cap, its peak pulled far down over his forehead, almost hiding his eyes. His jumper and trousers were of the common dungaree that sailors wear, while on his long, thin feet were pointed shoes of English make, stolen doubtless from some sea apprentice.

The two crimps approached a side door of the sailor's boarding-house, and the short man entered. The other turned a moment and, looking toward the ship, removed his peaked cap and ran long fingers through his hair. His hair was snow-white. The little pink eyes below his almost hairless brows stared sharply at the vessel. In a moment he replaced his cap, pulled the peak low on his forehead and turned to follow his partner.

Meanwhile, having returned unnoticed down the side street, the young man upon whom the loafers had commented had entered the corner doors and now stood at the bar. He was around twenty-seven years of age, his complexion fresh, his yellow hair curly, his figure very supple and athletic. Though his hands looked delicate and somewhat nervous his mouth was firm. His gray eyes flashed with quick, hard lights.

As he entered the swinging corner doors one of the loafers up the street looked round and, putting a hand on his companion's arm, exclaimed—

"The devil-dodger's gone into Pete's place!"

"Them missions to seamen people is goin' to get theirselves into trouble," said the other, turning about.

"They says as this 'ere one knows more'n a bit o' sailorin'," he added. " 'E worked wi' the North Sea fishin'-fleet afore 'e came out 'ere."

"It's the first time a chaplain from the Mission was ever in Pete's place," said the other.

They turned away and disappeared around a corner.

Pete, the Greek, the sailors' boarding-house master, and the young chaplain from the Mission to seamen faced one another across the bar, alone in the malodorous room.

The Greek was a big, broad-shouldered man of oily countenance; his dark eyes lowering above a coarse mouth. His upper lip, constantly drawn up a little as though in a contemptuous sneer, exposed regular white teeth, in some of which were large gold fillings. Upon his pudgy hands, now resting on the stained wood of the bar, were several gold rings. He was inclined to fleshiness; his chin a trifle double. A bristling black mustache accentuated the whiteness of his teeth. A tan silk shirt, wide open at the neck, exposed a well-muscled and hairy throat.

Leaning over the bar, he towered above the slight figure of the chaplain; his eyes glowing angrily.

"You best get!" he said, the words hissing through clenched teeth.

The chaplain smiled somewhat derisively.

"You see? *Get!*" snarled the boarding master, a finger pointing to the swinging doors, his wrathful eyes upon the other's watchful face.

"I may have to get *now*," replied the chaplain, his tones quite even; so even indeed as to seem almost disinterested.

"Before long *you* will get," he continued, and added, "You'll not come back."

The Greek rose to his full height, his hands clenched on the edge of the bar, his lip curled up.

"You t'eenk you mak' Pete de Greek get?" he sneered, his nostrils quivering.

"You'll pay," replied the other quietly

The boarding master leaned forward far over the bar, his face close to his adversary.

"I lak to poosh yo face een!" he said.

As the chaplain smiled there came into

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the eyes of the Greek a fluttering trace of wonder. No one had ever bearded a sailor's boarding master thus before. Undisturbed, their gang had shanghaied sailors all along the waterfront.

A side door opened, and the dwarfish crimp entered the room.

"Gimme one o' the real," he said, addressing Pete.

The Greek, reaching to a shelf above him, fetched down a black bottle.

"'Ow ees eet comin,' Skvinters?" he asked.

"'S a'right," replied the crimp and glanced at the chaplain.

The Greek, his face wreathed in smiles, laid a hand upon the crimp's shoulder.

"You mak' talk to Skvinters," he cried, then loudly laughed, "Ho, ho!" and added, "Ven you mak' Skvinters stop de shanghai of de sailor, den you mak' Pete stop."

The crimp stared at the chaplain.

"You mak' talk to Skvinters, see?" cried the boarding master again, patting the crimp upon his shoulder.

"'Ave a little swig from ze good black bottle, mister," said the crimp, shoving the bottle toward the chaplain.

The sound of a smothered cry came from behind the side door, and the crimp hastened away, the bottle in his hand, and closed the door behind him.

For a moment the chaplain looked up at the boarding master.

"I said you'd pay. *You will*," he said.

"You mak' talk to Skvinters," laughed the other; then, his face dark with rage, leaned over the bar.

As a burst of laughter came from the side room the chaplain stepped to the swinging doors and passed out to the street.

For an instant the Greek stared after him; then opened the side door and entered the dingy room.

Men in a state of stupor lay on the floor and lolled upon benches. A few sea-chests were stacked against the farther wall, canvas sea-bags piled about them. In the far corner a sturdily built man struggled with the two crimps. While the squinter held his arms the albino endeavored to force dark liquor down his throat. Suddenly, ceasing to struggle, he fell limp and, his head drooping, tumbled with closed eyes to the floor.

"Better geeve 'eem leedle more," said the Greek; "mak' 'eem sleep good."

"I don't t'eenk 'e dreenk mooch," he added, looking down upon the seemingly inert sailor.

"'E's a tugboat hand," said the albino. "It don't take much to fix some o' them."

"Dot's a good boy, 'Snowball'," said the Greek. "We feex dem anyvay."

He looked about the room, counting the men.

"You only got seven?" he asked and added, "Ve got to 'ave eight."

"'S a' right, boss," said the squinter, corking the black bottle, "There's the stiff up-stairs."

The Greek stared at him, then, throwing up his head, laughed aloud.

"Skvinters, you iss de jewl," he said. "I never thought o' dot. "Ze boats iss ready?" he asked.

The squinter, nodding acquiescence, turned to his partner.

"C'mon, Snowball, let's get 'em abroad," he said.

The Greek opened a door leading to a narrow passage and passed to the sidewalk. Night had fallen. A few lamps cast thin rays of light along the waterfront. Across the street the rotting piles swayed a little to the swirl of the tide. The sound of boats that bobbed against one another came from the landing-steps. A dull, cold sheen lay over the water inshore. From the bay there twinkled the riding light of a ship at anchor.

The boarding master returned to the room.

"All right. Get dem an' don't lose no time," he said.

"We'll take a drink on the house first, boss," said the albino.

"'Ere," said the Greek and, taking a bottle from his inside pocket, passed it to the squinter.

"Watch yourself, Squints," said the albino.

The Greek went into a peal of laughter while the squinter scowled savagely at the other crimp.

"You don't trust no one, heh? You t'eenk mebbe Pete shanghai ze two best boys on ze Coast. No, no; Pete know better," said the boarding master.

None the less the squinter, taking the bottle, both smelled and looked at it carefully before putting it to his lips.

"Pass it on, Squints," said the albino and, removing his cap, ran his fingers through his hair.

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Again the squinter's disfigured eyes flamed up.

"I ain't no pink-eye rat," he growled, hate in his face and his hand at his back.

The albino's face was crimson. His pink eyes on fire, he also reached for his knife.

"Don't get to no quarrels, boys," said the Greek. "One stiff's enough."

"You can not 'elp ze looks, boys," he added, grinning at them as they replaced the knives.

"Come on—let's get *him* down first," said the squinter, leaving the room by a stairway.

In a few moments the crimps returned; the squinter walking backward and carrying a man's unresisting feet. The albino following bore the man's shoulders, and they laid him upon a bench.

"Dead as 'arness pork," said the boarding master. "Get eem aboard. That save me burying' 'eem."

They bore the dead man down the passage and across to the waiting boat, then, returning, loaded sea-chests and sea-bags and last of all the sailors, who lay sprawled amongst and upon their poor belongings.

The crimps cast off the boat's painters and pulled toward the ship's riding light.

"Watch out zat ze mate don't get wise to zee stiff," called Pete.

The only response was the slow *clack-clack* of the oars in the rowlocks.

THE mate of the ship *Harper* looked over the railing toward boats that approached through the gloom of night. He was a tall man, and his heavy shoulders rested on the bulwarks as the foremost boat drew in below the main rigging.

"Get for'ard," he snapped, looking down into the boat below him.

A man sprang upward and, his hands grasping the railing top, made to clamber aboard.

"Mr. Mate—Mr. Mate," he said.

The mate saw his face level with the railing.

"You'll obey orders aboard this ship—get for'ard," he snapped, letting drive with a clenched fist.

The man fell backward upon his fellows, who, awakening with the cold night wind on their faces, cursed each other.

The boats proceeded to the fore rigging, and the crimps hooked their boat-hooks.

The mate walked aft; and the squinter, climbing aboard, watched the glow of his pipe-bowl as he moved to and fro across the quarterdeck.

"'S a' right," he called down to the albino, and tossed him a rope's end.

The albino made the rope fast under the arms of a semi-conscious sailor, who, as they together hove him upward to the deck, feeling accustomed things before him, assisted them a little with his hands and feet. One by one the men were hauled aboard and staggered across the deck to the forecastle, within which a lamp gave smoky light. As soon as one boat was unloaded the squinter paused to pass each man a drink, and all, becoming stupefied again, drowsed in their bunks.

When all but the dead man and the man whom the mate had struck backward were aboard, the albino called for a second rope. He made a rope fast to each, and himself ascended to the deck. Together they hoisted the dead man up and over the rail and carried him to the forecastle. They rolled him into a bunk and left him, his face toward the bulkhead; then returned for the limp man in the bottom of the first boat.

"Leave him lie," said the albino as they rolled him in over the railing.

They laid him down on the deck beside the scuppers under the railing; then took the chests and sea-bags to the forecastle.

"Let's get a drink, Squints," said the albino.

There was the sound of a quick blow. The albino, rising from the deck, holding his jaw, muttered:

"All right. I'll get even with you."

"You calls me that, I kills you," retorted the dwarfish crimp.

They sat and drank together from the same bottle. Presently the squinter rose.

"I'm going aft to give the mate a swallow," he said as he stepped to the deck. The albino made no reply.

The squinter walked up to the mate on the quarter-deck.

"Mister," he said.

"Get for'ard," snapped the mate.

"I brought you a bottle," said the crimp.

"Get for'ard," snapped the mate.

"Mister," said the crimp, "you killed that feller you knocked backwards."

He turned and walked forward, the mate at his heels.

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By the main rigging he stopped.

"We rolled him into a bunk, mister," he said and, his voice low, added, "I can get you a hand to take his place, mister."

Whispering, he took a bottle from his pocket and thrust it into the mate's hand.

"Get him to take a swallow, mister—it's the dope," he said, then, climbing over the rail, dropped into one of the boats.

The mate entered the forecastle. He looked at the sailors, touching them each in turn. When he came to where the dead man lay the albino spoke,

"That's a stiff," he said: "a little joke o' Pete's. I can get you a hand to take his place, mister."

The mate looked at him; and, a finger to his lips, he drew forth a bottle.

The mate winked slowly at the albino.

The squinter clambered aboard and looked into the forecastle.

"You two boys come aft," said the mate. "We'll take a little shot together."

The crimps followed him aft, side by side.

A shower fell, a gusty wind blowing suddenly along the dark deck.

"Here you are, sons," said the mate, opening an iron door beneath the break of the poop. "Step in and I'll strike a light."

The squinter, eager to see his companion trapped, entered, followed by the albino, equally eager to see him trapped.

The mate clanged the door behind them and locked it; then walked forward.

The flurry of rain was over, the wind fallen away again. From the water there came the sharp *clack-clack* of oars. By the dim starlight the mate saw a boat that drifted away from the fore rigging.

He looked into the forecastle; then went aft and called the skipper.

They carried the dead man to the deck, lashed weights to his feet and dropped him to the starry bay.

To cries that came from the boatswain's locker they paid no need. The skipper returned to his cabin.

The mate lay down, wrapped in a long oilskin coat, on the main hatch to sleep and hold the anchor watch.

AT MIDNIGHT the Greek prepared to roll into his blankets. In the fact that his runners had not yet returned there was nothing strange. Perhaps a ship was coming through the heads, and they, good boys, were resting on their oars while the tide bore them toward her. Pete knew—he could see them at it—how quickly they would board her and mingle with the arriving sailors, in from the passage round the far-off Horn. In pleased imagination he heard the loosened tongues of the crew as Squinters and Snowball passed the drinks around.

"They'll be bringing in a boatload apiece before morning," he muttered, and, grasping a short club that leaned against the wall beside his bed, thumped upon the floor.

In a moment the door was softly opened, and a gray-haired mulatto peered in.

"Israel, there's two boat-loads comin' in the morning. 'Ave ze breakfast ready for ze boys," said the Greek.

The mulatto disappeared noiselessly as he had come.

Pete looked from his window at the ship's riding light; listening for the sound of oars. All was still.

Suddenly, thinking he saw a shadow on the street below, he leaned far over the windowsill. Two men approached through the gloom, and he greeted them quietly.

"Coom een, boys—I' t'ought you was gone to meet a sheep," he said.

He descended to the barroom and reached to get them a drink.

"Turn oop ze light—turn oop ze light," he said; then, the lamp turned high, illuminating all the room, stood astonished, his big mouth agape.

A hatless man, his face discolored by bruises, leaned toward him, shaking a fist. It was the sailor who had struggled and fallen so suddenly limp.

"V'ere's my boys?" asked the Greek half-audibly.

The other, a supple, curly-headed man, placed a hand upon the sailor's shoulder to lead him from the room, ignoring the Greek.

"V'ere's my boys?" asked the Greek again, his voice tremulous with anger not unmixed with foreboding.

The chaplain, smiling into his face, led the sailor to the street.

The boarding master vaulted the bar and strode to the door. They were gone up the side street, and he listened to the tide, hoping to hear oars upon the water.

Over the bay the *Harper's* riding light twinkled like a fallen star.

He crossed the street, and, standing on the landing-steps, caught the familiar sound of a boat that bobbed against the

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piles. Hurrying along the wharf, he looked in a few moments into an empty boat, and, dropping into her, recognized her immediately as his own. Casting off the painter, he seized the oars and pulled for the ship. A dark tide swirled by as with powerful arms he almost lifted her bow from the water.

Knowing every bearing of the shore lights, he pulled to pass to leeward of the spar buoy; his stroke long and regular, his big shape swinging with a beautiful precision. Had one been able to see him he would have seen that the Greek's lip was curled contemptuously, baring his teeth.

Suddenly there was a sharp bump and the rattle of boats that banged their gunwales together. Thrown backward, the Greek was instantly up again and on his feet. Beside him lay the empty boat into which he had pulled, colliding heavily, though damaging neither of the strongly built boats. He recognized his second boat and, stepping into her, sought some explanation for her presence there. Her trailing painter, fouling the spar buoy, had held her. He made the painter secure and proceeded toward the *Harper*.

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THE mate of the *Harper* stood motionless beside the main-brace blocks listening to the *clack-clack* of a strong oarsman's oars, to the quick ripple of water at the bow of an advancing boat. In his right hand he held a teak belaying-pin. With his left thumb he crammed the tobacco into the bowl of a pipe in his pocket. As the boat drew close he crouched a little, keeping his head behind a topsail brace-block.

A boat-hook was hooked to the rail a few feet from him, and immediately booted feet scraped upon the plates overside. His bare feet soundless, the mate stepped back a pace. A head arose, outlined against the glow of the 'longshore lights, followed by wide and agile shoulders.

The Greek leaped lightly to the deck and, peering about him, sought his bearings.

Noiselessly the mate laid down the teak-wood pin.

Silent as a cat, he stepped toward the boarding master, who saw him come. The Greek sought to draw his knife, but was frustrated by the mate, who, used to dago ways, had already found it. It gleamed in the starshine, flashing overboard. In an instant they were locked in a stern embrace.

Above them the sky was star-besprinkled, silent as a tomb. No tide-lap broke the stillness. The *Harper's* mast-heads were lost amidst the stars; her rigging a softly outlined web above the soundless combatants. Inextricably clasped, they stood erect a while; swaying a little back and forth.

Presently the sound of the Greek's boots upon the deck-planks was faintly audible. Endeavoring to stamp upon the mate's bare feet, his boot clinked sharp against a ring-bolt. Then minutes passed in complete silence.

The riding light, flaring suddenly, lighted the decks, fore and amidships, shone for an instant on the interlocked figures and went out. A quick wind blew, a tide-lap rippling by. Then the scrape of the boarding master's boots was the only sound.

Presently there was audible an indrawing of breath. The struggle was beginning to tell on one of the fighters. Neither spoke nor grunted with the mighty strain. The gasps grew more frequent. The Greek's boots seemed to hold more firmly to the planks.

The silence was suddenly broken by a dull thud; the crush of a fist upon bare human flesh.

An upright figure stooped above a figure recumbent. Boots scraping heavily upon the pine planking, the stooped figure rose erect and moved toward the railing. Upheld in Herculean arms, beneath which a half-naked figure loomed in the glimmering starshine, there rose the large body of an unresisting man whose limbs hung limp. There came a long indrawing of breath, a hard grunt; simultaneously a quick stiffening in the lifted form. In absolute silence each great figure gathered itself for a final and terrific effort of release.

THERE was a loud splash in the dark water alongside.

The mate cast off a boat painter from beside the main braces, then, going to the forecastle head, lowered and relighted and hoisted again the ship's riding light; his face expressionless in its cold yellow blaze.

The Greek rose to the surface of the bay and saw the shining lights of San Francisco twinkling toward him. Feeling the ship's side, he felt for his boat; then, looking

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upward to the topsail braces, beside which he had left her, knew that she was gone. His right eye was closed. His head pained him. With difficulty he freed himself of his boots, then of his clothing. With a last look for his missing boat he struck out, making for a light that he knew would lead him to the spar buoy.

His bare shoulders clove a white wedge in the water. His swinging arm made a chill air upon his face. Settling to a long and steady stroke, conscious of the glimmer of the riding light above and about him, he cursed the ship. A puff of wind blew. The ripples slapped his face. His gaze upon the bearing of the spar buoy, he exerted his utmost strength, and drove through the water.

Presently, the exhilaration of his cold plunge giving way, he grew conscious of a weariness, so changed his stroke. His limbs grew numb. The water was bitterly cold. Rolling upon his back, he kicked out furiously; the starlight in his eyes; his black chest rising and falling. Forgetting to conserve his strength, he endeavored to swim faster and, a false stroke sending his mouth under, swallowed salt water and gasped; then, ceasing to swim, trod water.

With a broken curse he turned, his teeth bared at the ship behind him. His teeth chattered. Enraged and terrified, he again swam on toward the spar buoy. His right eye closed; his left was but half-open now! A sort of drowsiness was overtaking him. He tried to hurry again; then, realizing that doom lay in haste as well as in slowness, swam and panted like a drowning dog. He seemed to see before him a fair-faced man who smiled derisively. Rage flooded him.

"I lak to poo—" he cried, and swallowed a mouthful of salt water.

His voice, broken and choked, frightened him. The face still smiled.

Gurgling with rage, he struggled and went down. Rising again, he beat a fist against wood and, clinging to the gunwale of the boat at the spar buoy, tried for a while to climb over her side; then, realizing his folly, pulled himself to her square stern and was in a minute aboard. For a while he lay exhausted, shuddering in her bottom.

Rising at length, he cast her painter adrift and seized the oars. The feel of the oars in his hands, the noise that they made as he dropped them to the rowlocks, brought life back to him, and he lay back upon them. The changed motion, the swinging grasp, made his blood run. Faster and faster he pulled the boat flying through the water.

Soon she lay at the landing-steps, and he stepped ashore, naked and trembling from the dire reaction of his battles. Water, running from his hairy body, gleamed in the lantern-light. His loose lips half-parted he looked at the *Harper;* then, muttering a threat, stumbled across the street and entered his boarding-house.

A shriek rose from a dark cubby-hole at the end of the side passage. Bare feet stumbled in the dark, and teeth chattered.

The old mulatto, beaten to wakefulness, brought rum to the naked Greek, whose hands shook as he lighted the barroom lamp.

BEFORE the first streak of dawn the boatswain roused the *Harper's* crew. Lamplight gleamed from galley and from cabin.

"Get your coffee now and step along," said the boatswain, lighting the forecastle lamp.

The sailors, tumbling from their bunks, stared, dazed, about them.

"Wot ship's this?" asked one.

"I thought we was at Pete the Greek's," said another.

"We was. We ain't now," another answered.

"W'ere's Dave?" asked one.

"He ain't here. He ain't no sailor," replied another, "He's a tugboat hand."

"Makes no difference," said another.

The mate looked in.

"Look alive there! It'll be man the windlass in a minute."

"Give us a fill o' 'backy, sons," said the boatswain at the door.

" 'Ere you are," said a sailor. "Are you the bos?"

"Looks like we was two 'ands short, bos," said another.

The boatswain winked.

There was a sound of scuffling on the deck without; then a man shot over the doorsill and sprawled upon the forecastle deck. While the sailors stared the mate appeared, dragging the squinter with him.

"Get your coffee, you two lubbers," he said, and was gone.

"That's evens, ain't it?" laughed a sailor.

The crimps stared in silence at the sailors. The sailors sipped their coffee.

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The mate's whistle blew, and they tramped out to the deck, the crimps remaining behind.

The boatswain looked in again.

"Git out o' here!" he said.

"Mister—" began the albino.

"——! You'd stop a clock!" said the boatswain. "Man the windlass."

"Mister, we're going ashore," said the albino.

"Yus—you are! In Falmouth," said the boatswain.

"Are you coming, or does you have to be fetched?" he added.

The squinter put a hand within his jacket and, bringing out a bottle, held it to the boatswain, smiling ingratiatingly.

The boatswain took it and smashed it on his curly head.

"Man the windlass, you two dogs," he said.

As the albino's right hand went behind him the bos leaped clear of the deck, and his fist took the crimp under the chin. He tossed the knife overboard as the mate looked in.

"'Ere they comes. Heave ho!" cried a sailor at the windlass, while the cable clanked at the hawse-pipe.

"There ain't no go-ashore for you, me bright beauties. Heave it is," cried another.

"Make 'em sing, bos," laughed one.

"That's it, me bully boys!" laughed another as the crimps joined in the chantey chorus.

"Hark at 'em sing," said the bosun. "They'll make sailors yet."

The ship passed the heads; dawn coldly streaked along the eastern hills.

"Loose the topsails," shouted the mate; while the tug, letting go the line, steamed close alongside, inbound for her wharf.

From the bows of the tug a man whose face was dark with bruises waved his hat to the *Harper*.

"There's old Davy," said a sailor. "I wonder how he made his getaway."

SHORTLY after noon that day the young chaplain from the Mission strolled along the waterfront and stopped to go aboard the tug. He sat in her bow, talking to the man with the bruised face, while above them the tugboat skipper watched another tug bringing a ship in.

The skipper leaned over his bridge-rail.

"Something doing outside the heads, mister," he said to the chaplain. "You'd best be going ashore. We're off."

"Any objection to my coming with you?" asked the chaplain.

"Not if you don't care when you get back," replied the skipper, reading the signals of his fellow tugboat.

In a few minutes he was steering for the heads.

"The *Harper's* fifty miles outside with her fore topgallantmast gone. She wants a tow back," said the skipper to the chaplain on the bridge beside him.

"There's dirty weather brewing," he added. "It'll be midnight before we get back."

TOWARD dusk the tug picked up the *Harper*, partially dismasted; caught in a squall that forenoon with the loss of her fore topgallantmast. The tugboat skipper, followed by the chaplain, jumped aboard the ship.

There was no wind. The skipper went aft to talk with the master of the *Harper* ere taking his tow-line, while the chaplain entered the forecastle, where the sailors had just finished their suppers.

"If we'd had a good crew, mister—" began a sailor, his words cut short by the quick shrill of the mate's whistle down the deck.

The tugboat's skipper had leaped to his own craft, and they hurried to pass a line aboard her; the tug easing ahead of the ship, the chaplain left on the ship's deck—a matter of no consequence to any one, since tug and ship were both bound in, and would arrive together.

A sigh of wind came out of the northerly, to die away again as the *Harper* was headed for the Golden Gate. The mate cried out to brace the yards around. Darkness fell, and the topsails flapped heavily, idle against the spars.

A northerly air stole down out of a starless sky above an invisible sea. A swell lifted the ship, and the tugboat's light dipped for a moment out of sight in a hollow. Her topsails wind-bellied, the ship lay over a little.

"I wish I'd stood on," said the skipper of the *Harper*. "There's a fine fair breeze blowing up."

Presently the wind cried menacingly, and a spray slapped upon the weather plates.

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The night was like a dead man's shroud; the air a company of mourners at their moaning.

The mate went to the forecastle head.

"Get away from there and keep lookout from the top of the forward house," he said to the lookout man. "If that tow-line parted it'd kill you."

The lookout man went to the top of the forward house, the mate to the bridge.

A squall hummed through the shrouds. A sea boarded the ship in the waist.

A voice from the top of the forward house rang down the deck—

"Tow-line's carried away, sir!"

The skipper came from the chartroom. In the scud of rising wind and sea the tow-boat's lights were indiscernible.

"Put her round," said the skipper to the mate. "We'll run before it. It's a fine, fair wind."

"All hands wear ship!" cried the mate.

The wind rose higher as they manned the braces; the ship paying off to take the wind upon her starboard quarter. The night was black about her. Round her bow a wedge of sea-fire shone, illumining the faces of the seamen at her lee fore braces.

"Hey!" cried the boatswain, peering at the chaplain's sea-lit face beside him. "Looks like you was takin' the long passage, mister."

"Tomorrow, bos," said the mate, "we'll have to get busy and cut a new topgallant-mast out of that spare topmast."

"It's going to blow tomorrow, mister," said the boatswain.

ALL night, running before an ever rising wind, the *Harper* drove deep-smothered in the sea. When dawn came a nor'wester howled down the heaped Pacific. Rain drove from clouds that hung upon the mast-heads. Skipper and mate stared aft to the following weather. The old man shook his head.

"Too late to heave her to," he said. "She'll have to run before it."

The wind increased from a moderate gale to a full gale; from a full gale to a heavy; then, the ocean a whirled white mist beneath it, the wind went mad.

"A man to the lee wheel," said the skipper.

The mate blew his whistle.

"A man to the lee wheel, bos," he shouted, bending from the poop rail.

The boatswain beat his way forward.

"You," he bellowed to the albino, whose face was now as white as his hair, "get to that lee wheel."

Mountainous seas rolled up astern. The weather helmsman watched his compass.

"Watch your compass," yelled the mate to the albino. "*Quit looking astern.* Help him to hold her!"

A wave, high-ridged, lopped over the taffrail; water swirling to the helmsmen's knees. The weather helmsman took no heed. The albino's hands were loose upon the wheel-spokes.

The skipper, seated in the chart-house, looked up as a voice addressed him.

"Can you let me have a suit of oil-skins, sir?"

He looked questioningly to the mate.

"The devil-dodger, sir," said the mate. "Came off with the tug and couldn't get back."

"I'll have to take you to Falmouth," said the Old Man. "I'll get you some oil-skins, and when it moderates I'll sign you on."

The chaplain got into his oilskins at the chartroom door.

The Old Man stepped out to watch the mountains of the sea roll up.

"*The wheel—the wheel!*" he shouted suddenly.

A vast, black-hollowed, gray back rolled upon the ship, its summit mountain-high above her taffrail.

The albino, turning, saw its approach. Leaping from the wheel, he raced forward to escape the devastating sea that shattered to cataracts upon the poop.

The weather helmsman, wrenched from his hand-hold, was swept forward and flung, broken, to the quarter-deck.

"*The wheel—the wheel!*" shouted the skipper, clinging to the topmast backstays, and deep in the sea.

The chaplain leaped to the skylight top and, bent into the terror of wind and water, saw the battered helmsman borne away; then instantly was at the weather helm; his arms nigh torn from their sockets as he fought to hold the frightened ship.

The mate, on the main deck, seeking the lost helmsman, sought in vain; then, coming to the forecastle, seized the first man he met.

"The lee wheel—get to the lee wheel!" he shouted, his hands upon a hunched fellow seated within the forecastle door.

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The squinter hastened aft, the mate at his heels, a belaying-pin smiting on his broad, bare shoulders.

The *Harper* staggered on, crimp and chaplain at her helm.

At mid-forenoon a sailor rose to go to the relief of the weather helm. Opening the door a little, he peered out, watching his chance for passage of the deck. The albino, cowering beneath the forecastle head, seeing the house door open, darted for shelter. He grasped the door, the sailor yelling at him while the ship rolled drunkenly.

A sea flooded her fore decks, and, crashing upon the half-opened door, flung it backward upon its hinges. The hinges were smashed. Water swamped the forecastle. In semi-darkness sailors stumbled toward the opening, seeking escape. Sea-chests and sea-bags, swept to the deck, were washed overboard. Bunk-boards and straw mattresses floated away—astern, where the gray gulls hovered above them, screaming. Destruction was complete.

The sailors climbed to the top of the deck-house. Seeing the albino gasping below them where he clung, helpless and half-drowned, to the house-rail, they reached down and helped him up. His head was cut by the broken door. Blood trickled from his white hair. He lay on the deck-house, his face to the clouds, and no one paid further heed to him.

The *Harper* staggered on, her topsails board-hard and flat on the gale. Not a ropeyarn parted. Not a brace stranded. Not a backstay gave.

Morning passed. Afternoon drew toward evening. The Old Man sat in his chartroom. The mate, attempting to get forward, beaten by a piece of unseen wreckage, crept back to the chartroom with his right foot maimed. He leaned in the doorway, his face white with pain, his eyes upon the sea.

The sailors huddled together upon the forward house, the boatswain amongst them.

The weather helmsman, unconscious of wrenched arms and aching limbs, his eyes upon the compass, knew no time.

As day faded the squinter looked up and saw the *Harper's* wild, white wings outspread. He sensed the tremble of her leaping hull. Forward, dark in the looming night, he watched great water ridges crumble and fall, and marvel of the undreamed waters grew within him.

The mate limped from the chartroom to light the compass lights. The skipper, seeing him go, saw that he limped, and followed. The mate, clinging to the skylight, waited while a sea raged over the taffrail. When that sea was past the *Harper* flew without a skipper. The mate lighted the binnacles and returned to the chartroom; then, thinking the old man was gone below for food, went also below and found the cabin deserted. Seeking for food, he fell, exhausted, and lay upon the cabin deck. Weak with fatigue and pain, he drowsed away.

Darkness was beyond all words; chaotic and supreme.

The helmsmen held the *Harper* on her storming way; the chaplain guiding her; the squinter's iron arms taking the heave of her wheel while, watching his compass, he learned to steer.

His fascinated eyes fast on the compass card, hunger assailed the weather helmsman; his arms aching; his lips dry with the crusty salt of the sea. Once he looked to leeward, to see for the first time his comrade at the wheel.

The crimp, looking up at that instant, met his gaze. The binnacles shone upon their faces. The chaplain's face was pale with weariness. A laugh was bright about the squinter's parted lips. His eyes shone in new-found wonder. Waving a bare arm, he shouted a challenge to the sea and laughed to his shipmate.

Sensing then a sudden glory, the chaplain gripped the wheel again, his eyes on his compass.

Night passed on, timeless eternity.

Ere day returned the chaplain shivered, unutterably weary; his hands weak on the wheel-spokes. The rain drove on him. The abysmal wind howled by.

The crimp, his gaze upon his compass, was steering the *Harper*.

At dawn the forward house stood desolate, its railing gone; no sailors left upon it.

The crimp glanced up, saw the pale day and the abandoned deck and shook a hard fist at the gale.

The mate, awakening, crawled on hands and knees to the pantry, and, finding sea-biscuit, filled both his pockets; then, himself unfed, ascended to the chartroom once again. Through the port he saw the weather helmsmen droop at the wheel and sink, exhausted, to the grating. The lee

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helmsman waved to him, a laugh on his disfigured countenance.

The mate crept out and, clinging to the skylight, reached the wheel. He passed food to the crimp, who, cramming his mouth with biscuit, shook his head and steered on.

The mate bade the chaplain go to the chartroom and sleep; then took the weather helm. The seas swept about him, twisting his maimed foot. Overcome in a little time by pain, he sank to the grating and presently made his way back to the chartroom.

The squinter was alone; unabated fury round him. The morning passed; the chaplain asleep in the chartroom; the mate helpless beside him.

Rain and spray hid the squat helmsman so that the mate, looking from a chart-house port, saw the ship fly on as if unguided, only the gear above her taffrail visible. Toward evening the chaplain awoke and bound the mate's foot; then, finding food, fed him and returned to the wheel.

The squinter had moved to windward and refused to leave, a cold, hard look in his huge eyes. The chaplain shouted to him to go below, to find oilskins. He shook his head and stared at the mizzen topsail above him; his teeth set.

Night drew in again, the chaplain at the lee helm.

The mate in the chartroom knew that the binnacle lights were out. Powerless to get to the oilroom for oil, he waited alone; knowing that doom was nigh. Darkness descended and the ship flew on.

The lee helmsman could see no compass card. Sensing his comrade's hands, he helped to twirl the spokes, wondering.

The savage wind smote on the crimp's shoulders; on the nape of his naked neck. He kept it there; steering by the feel of it; his every nerve alert. He was become as the gulls, as the wave-tops, as the ship herself; yet master of all, while like them a creature of the sea. When day returned his solemn eyes fell to the compass card. The wind shrieked disappointedly; abating at last.

Toward mid-morning the low skies arose, the rain ceased and the sea grew bright; the ship taking the ridges lightly—as a tired mare canters home at the end of a gallop.

The chaplain, leaving the wheel to his comrade, fetched him food.

The mate, rested and fed, was easier; his foot less painful.

By noon the sky was high; the sea ran easily. The sun came out, dazzling on the sea-crests and the ship's washed topsails. Terror was over and the world grown beautiful again.

The mate sat by the wheel, the ship steering easily under his hands. The crimp slept, face downward on the bare poop deck; his brown undershirt drying upon him; the breeze ruffling his curling black hair. The chaplain leaned, dozing, against the wheel-box.

When dusk fell stars were resplendent, reflected in a windless sea.

The crew of the *Harper* slumbered.

WHEN the mate awoke at dawn he woke to see a low-decked tramp steamer to windward with a boat at her davit falls.

The boat came under the *Harper's* side, and the steamer's mate stepped aboard. He was met by a man who limped upon a bandaged foot, a dwarfish fellow who squinted horribly and a slender man whose eyes shone starry.

He glanced along the devastated deck.

"You'll abandon her?" he said.

A cackle came from the throat of the dwarfish man, like the cackle of a wild gray goose.

"Give us a hand to swing her yards and to get her anchors over and we'll take her to 'Frisco," said the mate of the *Harper*.

A little air was blowing up from south by easterly.

"It's six hundred miles, sir," said the steamer man. "I can't spare you any men."

"We brought her out. We'll take her in," said the other.

The steamer hands set sail for them, hoisting topgallants on the main and mizzen and sheeting the foresail home.

PETE, the Greek, rolling over in his bed, stared up at the face of the old mulatto.

"Mornin' a'ready, Israel?" he growled as the old man shook his shoulder.

"No, boss. There's a ship coming in," said the mulatto.

Before the words were well spoken the Greek was on the floor, groping for his clothes. From his window he saw upon the bay the green sidelight of an incoming ship.

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"It'll be the big *Austrasia*. She's due in," he said. "Issy, see that there's bottles in de boat."

Soon he was at the oars, rowing fast to the anchorage. He heard the cable rattle out; then over his shoulder saw the anchor light swung high. Fog hung between clouds and water, and the night was chill. The ship had come in on the last of the breeze with the flowing tide to help her.

"I pays now for dem —— on de *Harper*," muttered the Greek, feeling a bottle in his pocket.

From over the water came the crackle and run of halyards. He wondered that no sailors sung out upon the bunt and clew-lines.

The ship was silent; a figure moving indistinctly on her forecastle head beneath the riding light. The fog was become very dense. The boarding-master hooked his boat-hook to the rail and climbed noiselessly aboard by the fore rigging. On the forecastle head a man lowered the riding light and, having turned it higher, hoisted it again. The boarding-master stepped up behind him.

"Deed you 'ave ze nice voyage, my boy?" he asked ingratiatingly; then as the other turned upon him stepped quickly back.

"E-e-eh!" he snarled. "So you get first to de sheep a'ready tonight, eh? I no care! I get dem sailors anyvay. You see."

"You'll get no sailors aboard this ship, you dirty dog," said the chaplain.

The Greek's eyes were fiery.

"Vot you call me? You leedle peeg! Heh?" he asked; his voice aquiver with rage fanned by the other's nonchalance.

"A dirty dog. You dirty dog," repeated the chaplain.

The boarding-master sprang at him, his fists upraised, hate in his face.

"Get off this ship," said a hard voice behind him. "I've thrown you off once."

The Greek stared at the mate of the *Harper* and, surprized one instant, laughed the next. His adversary limped upon a bandaged foot.

"I pays, by gar!" he growled and rushed upon him.

The chaplain, stepping between them, fell to the deck; the boarding-master's huge fist full in his face.

The boarding-master laughed.

"Now, by gar, I pays!" he shouted, and struck at the mate.

The mate, warding the blow, sought to strike back. The riding light, the sea-fog scarce dimming its yellow brightness, shone upon them. The bay was enshrouded; no shore-lights visible. The tide at flood, no lap of water broke the stillness. The fore-sail hung in pale festoons above them.

The mate stumbled against a bollard, and the Greek laughed again; then with upraised fists battered his defense away. In vain the mate strove to defend himself; his eyes blazing defiance into the boarding-master's face.

"I drowns you, you sailor peeg," laughed the Greek.

The chaplain, rising to his knees, fell back; the Greek's boot in his face. Blood ran down his chin.

Stepping back, the Greek took a capstan bar from the bar rack behind him. He swung it high over his shoulders above the mate.

"Now—I pays!" he shouted.

His shout was choked by a fierce hand upon his collar, jerking him backward. As the bar dropped to the deck he kicked at the mate and swung to meet his adversary.

"Skvinters!" he cried. "You coome 'ome, eh?" and a strange qualm ran through him.

"You dirty dog," said the crimp, his voice hard upon the silence.

The Greek, rushing at him, was met by outstretched hairy arms, bare and terrific as the arms of some tree-swinging creature.

He reached behind him for a knife—to meet the mate's hand. The knife flashed overboard.

The mate stepped back, away from the combatants. The chaplain, rising on his elbow, mopped his mouth.

Squinters and the Greek stood erect, locked in a grim embrace, directly beneath the riding light. For a while they scarcely moved; then swayed this way and that, each seeking a first advantage. Neither gained.

The mate leaned on the forecastle rail.

Their feet, catching simultaneously in a jib sheet, each, stumbling, made the other stumble. They fell, locked together. They rolled over and over. The boarding-master, uppermost, sought to free a hand, to jab his adversary's face or gouge an eye from out its socket. The crimp rolled uppermost; the boarding-master beneath him. Gray wisps of breath came from their parted lips.

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They panted. The Greek, sensing a ring-bolt close, endeavored to crash the crimp's head against it. The crimp squirmed away and fetched the other's head down with a thud upon the deck planks.

They disengaged, and, leaping to their feet, struck blindly at each other; then were interlocked again in savage fury. They stumbled on sheets and bollards, bitts and ring-bolts, and fell to rise again. Sweat and blood ran down their distorted faces. They trembled with growing weakness. Their clothing torn away, they fought waist naked.

Suddenly the boarding-master leaped, to stamp upon his opponent's bare feet, missed his mark, stumbled and fell. He rose to his knees, and instantly the crimp's two fists were beating on his face.

The crimp laughed; then while the mate and chaplain leaned forward, a pair of sinewed arms closed, vice-like and immediate, about his waist, crushing him. Each muscle in his sweat-wet body tense, the Greek arose, his foe upheld above his shoulders. The crimp kicked, struggling vainly; and thus the boarding-master staggered to the forecastle rail. The crimp, ceasing his struggles, fell limp; dropping his monster hands about the other's ears and clawing to them with a simian grip.

The Greek, heaving the loose body from his arms, sought to free his ears of the tenacious hands upon them. The hands were firm, the crimp's whole weight behind them. Overbalanced and in torture, the Greek leaned far over the slack forecastle head rail chain, while his adversary, planting his feet against the forecastle beading, flung himself backward. A yell of agony arose as the Greek, losing his balance completely, overtoppled on the iron chain. He fell, his hands wildly seeking a hold upon the ship.

A loud splash arose from the water far below.

A hand gripped fast to a railing stanchion, and as the mate and chaplain stumbled to the rail a head, then shoulders, rose. A grinning face, wet with sweat and blood, stared up at them from squinting eyes. The crimp rolled back upon the forecastle head.

The mate leaned over the rail; peering into the fog-wreathed water. For an instant a face looked up, a gasping and exhausted face; the mouth gulping as though it sought and could not find the air wherewith to fill the lungs below; the eyes horrible with fear. While still the lips were parted two large hands clutched at the fog's intangible folds, and the riding light gleamed into the eyes and upon the gold rings on the fingers of the boarding-master.

Then there was silence on San Francisco Bay.

THE ROMANY PATTERAN

by George Gatlin

ROMANY patteran is a Gipsy phrase that is seen only occasionally in print. Kipling, Jack London and a few other writers have used it to describe the signs or trails left by Gipsies. While the phrase is used only occasionally, it is used probably more than the signs to which it refers, especially in the United States where Gipsies are abandoning their red wardos for speedier though less romantic automobiles.

Patteran, patrin, and patten are three words in Romanes, or the Gipsy language, which signify the signs which one Gipsy leaves on the road to show the route he has taken to friends who are following. The sign, or patteran, is usually found at the forks of a road. It may be a handful of grass or leaves thrown down at the head of a road, a bit of colored cloth tied to a fence, a cross mark on the ground, or a branch of a tree struck in the ground by the roadside. However, the true patteran is a handful of leaves; for the word in the Gipsy language means the leaf of a tree.

The use of a patteran is understood, but not extensively practised by Gipsies. American Gipsies probably use it less than those of some other countries. Highways and automobiles make the leaving of a trail impracticable, and the Romany patteran is even now spoken of by modern Gipsies as a method used by the *puro folkies drey the puro cheeros;* that is, the old people in the old days.

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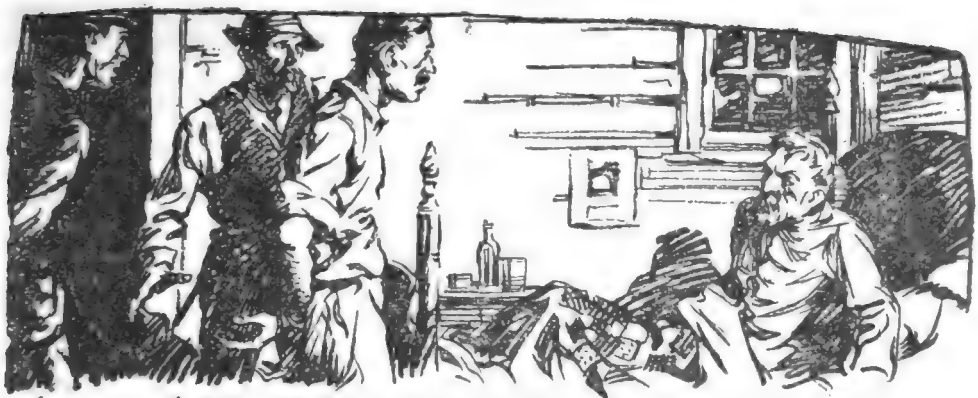

AT PENDER'S GAP

BY HOWARD ELLIS DAVIS

FIVE of us was gathered in a little log shack that had done duty in the past as quarters for turpentine hands in Hub Stone's orchard. Though the do' was shet, there was plenty of ventilation. The stick an' mud chimney at the end of the shack had fell down, leavin' a openin' through which a wagin could have driv', an' the wooden shutter was flung wide. For all intents an' purposes, as fur as privacy was concerned, we mought as well have been settin' on a log in the woods—better had been, as events proved out.

There was four of us young fellers, an' Gans Bradley. Three of us was settin' on a little bench. Len Donovan was settin' in the winder swingin' his legs. Gans, standin' in the middle of the flo' was doin' the talkin.' He was a big, heavy, black-mustached feller, double the age of any of the others of us; an' he sho loved to hear his mouth wag. We had met there 'bout two o'clock in the evenin', at his invitation.

"Fellers," he says, "you all know me. You know that I'm a man of action—a bad man to cross or fool with. When old man Gabe Patterson was elected sheriff, he come to me an' says: 'Gans, you're an ignurunt, law-breakin' fool an' they ain't but one of three things to do with you. The first two is either to kill you right off to start on, or lock you up in jail. But I don't want to take no extreme measures. You've got good nerve an' ain't skeerd of nothin' that walks on two legs. You've got a few other good pints that I won't stop to mention—one of 'em bein' the best little wife that ever wore a sunbonnet. So I'm goin' to fall back on the third an' only thing left for me to do. I'm goin' to make you one of my deputies. They was a king of Mexico done that once with some of his outlaws, an' they give him good service.'

"Now I ain't sayin' that I agrees with Gabe in all he said 'bout me; but he had me dead to rights 'bout my nerve, an' I've trailed down some of these here bad-men in the county an' brung 'em in. In fact, I've been jest about runnin' the county ever since I been deputy sheriff."

"Ruinin', you mean," says Len Donovan from his seat in the winder.

Gans histed his eyebrows at Len; but he cleared his throat an' went on:

"Havin' served the county good an' faithful, as you know, I've decided it's 'bout time for me to be reapin' some sort of reward. In cities an' sich, when a man holdin' public office gits to a certain pint they gits what they calls graft. I don't know prezactly how it's worked; but they takes for themselves money an' things what the county an' other folks pays for. Oh, they don't do it open, in course; but everybody knows it's bein' done an' jest winks at it.

"Now they ain't no legal, regular way to git graft in this here backwoods county, that I knows of; but I expects to have mine jest the same. It ain't nothin' but my due. So I've called you boys together, not

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only to help me git mine, but to share in the fruits thereof."

Gans ended the last in a deep, important tone an' stopped to wipe his mustache with the knuckle of his dog finger.

"I know," he continues, "that for some time you boys have been appropriatin' to yo' own use certain cattle what ain't been marked. An' I know that one day last week you driv off an' sold to a buyer on his way to Mobile with a bunch two steers an' a spotted yearlin', all three of which was branded an' duly marked in the years with the marks of their owners."

We three settin' on the bench sort of wiggled, an' Jo Carney, who was of a mo' nerveous disposition, hitched at his britches an' cleared his throat.

For Gans had spoke the truth. In them days, when folks was few up in this end of the county an' cattle was plentiful, it quite frequent happened that a calf would come an' grow up an' git weaned from its mammy 'thout ever gittin' marked an' branded. So it was the custom for cattle owners to git together every now an' so often an' decide, in as fair a way as they could, who those unmarked yearlin's rightfully belonged to, then pitch in together an' mark 'em in the years an' brand 'em. Cattle was usually driv in every fall from the hills to the river swamps, where they kept fat through the Winter on the mutton-cane. The meetin' to fix the ownership of the unmarked yearlin's always took place in the Spring when the cattle was rounded up out the swamps to be driv' back to the home range.

We four young fellers, who was jes' gittin' full grown, an' who was sort of devil-may-care rapscallions, not carin' much for nothin' nor nobody, had got in the way, now an' so often, mo' for devilmint than anything else, of searchin' out one of these here unmarked yearlin's in the swamp, shootin' it with a rifle, then butcherin' it, buryin' the hide, an' peddlin' the meat out in a big saw-mill settlemint some miles above. We couldn't have been lawed for sich, as there wasn't no established owner for the critter; but our appropriatin' it for our use was a matter that wouldn't have been looked on as honest by our folks, nor none of our neighbors, an' we knowed it. The line 'tween that an' actual cattle stealin' was so dim that, almost 'fo' we realized, some of us had crossed over. As a sort of dare by Pete Crowder, me an' Jo Carney taken him up, an' we three driv' off them two steers an' the spotted yearlin', as mentioned by Gans. But how he knowed it, was mo' than I could figger out.

Len Donovan, howsomever, now disclaimed any sich responsibility:

"I mought have help take some stock that didn't have no rightful owners, Gans," he says; "but I don't know nothin' 'bout them critters you say was driv' off an' sold to the man drivin' a bunch to Mobile. If you caught up with cattle thieves, why didn't you do yo' duty as a deputy an' 'rest 'em."

"You wasn't in that bunch?" Gans says, lookin' at him surprized-like.

"Ain't I said so?"

"Waal," Gans snaps, "hit was jest kase you wasn't let in on it. Jo an' Pete an' Wes was, anyhow," he says turnin' to us on the bench. "So it's all the same. As for my arrestin' anybody, that's my business. Don't cross me, boy. It's dangerous."

Len sorter grinned an' spit out the winder.

"I've got you boys in the holler of my hand, as the sayin' goes," Gans continues; "an' I could squnch you, if I wanted to. But I don't want to. I'm goin' to let you help me make some money. Now listen:

"They ain't better riders in the county than you fo', an' they ain't none knows the swamp above here as well, nor how the cattle ranges there. As you know, there's a good big pen at Pender's Gap in the swamp, where folks gathers their cattle every Spring in drivin' them out the swamp. Them cattle is in the swamp right now, an' fat. There's a road leads from the pen down to the river bank. I've got a flat hid jest below there what'll hold fifty head. We're goin' up there this evenin', round up a good bunch 'fo' dark, then, when night comes, we'll drive 'em from the pen down to the river an' git 'em on board the flat. There's two sets of good sweeps on that there flat an' we kin set them cattle crost the river in an hour. In the mornin' we'll drive 'em down through the next county to a feller I know who'll buy 'em for immediate shippin' an' pay us cash money. I'll take half the money an' you fo' kin divide the other half twixt you.

"They ain't much chance of any bein' up in the swamp this evenin'; but if somebody comes along an' makes inquiries as to what

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we're doin', why I kin tell 'em I had got wind of thieves mongst the cattle an' was roundin' 'em up to see if any had been took, an' that you fellers was helpin' me. You see I'm wearin' my badge." He opened his coat an' showed it pinned to his galluses. "We got to act now, kase we must make hay while the sun shines."

"I reckon," Len says from his seat in the winder, his lip sorter sneerin', "that you mean the sun is shinin' while old Gabe Patterson is sick. Kase you know that, though he is upward of seventy, they ain't never been a sheriff mo' active. He'd be on yo' trail 'fo' sundown tomorrow an' lock you up, or shoot —— outen you. As for me, when you said you had me in the holler of yo' hand an' could squnch me if you had a mind to, you was a cock-eyed liar. You ain't got me nowheres, an' ain't likely to have. A man who'll take advantage of another when he's sick an' helpless on his back, 'specially after he's give him the showin' that Gabe has you, ain't fitten to herd with varmints. You're a pot-bellied, cattle-thievin', double-crossin' crook, Gans Bradley, an' if you ever agin says so much as how-dee-do to me, I'll shoot enough daylight through you to read by. When I finds myself in the neighborhood of a skunk, I leaves him."

With that, boldin' his nose as if he smelt somethin' bad, he swung his legs out the winder an' jumped to the ground.

Feelin' very much the same sentimints as Len had jest expressed, I riz to my feet. Jo riz an' hitched at his britches. Pete riz. Gans, his face as red as that of a struttin' turkey gobbler, drawed a big forty-five out his hip pocket an' leaned in the winder.

"If it wasn't for pluggin' him in the back, I'd shoot him down like a dog," he growled 'tween his teeth. "Set down!" he said in a louder tone, turnin' to us. We set.

"Is he goin' to give this thing away?" he asked, lookin' us over critical.

"N-no, sir; I d-don't think so," Jo says, hitchin' at his britches, as Gans' eyes come to rest on him.

"He better not! He wouldn't dast, would he?"

"No, sir; he wouldn't dast," Jo agreed.

Then Gans turned his head an' we seen his eyes buck. Lookin' around to find what was producin' this effect on him, we seen that a stranger had come in through the openin' where the chimney had been.

He was tall an' lean an' stooped. He had on a slouch hat an' black whiskers on his face. His coat was too little, the sleeves reachin' half-way up to his elbows. He wore jeans britches, like the rest of us, an' on his heels was spurs.

"Good-evenin', friends an' *amigos*," he said in a sort of mournful tone of voice. "I've been restin' myself jest without an' have listened with interest to yo' conversation."

"Who'n —— are you?" asks Gans without no show of hospitality.

"Me?" replies the stranger. "I'm Hadigio Alvarez, from South America. Dig for short."

"I reckon you've took the wrong road," Gans replies, sorter fingerin' his gun. "We won't keep you."

"On the contrary, Mr. Bradley," this here Dig says, "I have been watchin' you for some time. I know of the arrangement you have to sell a bunch of cattle to the man in the next county. I know of the barge you have ready to take them across the river. I know of the three head of stock these young men drove off an' disposed of."

Jo's teeth begins to chatter in a distressin' way, an' my mouth went so dry I couldn't swaller. But we knowed that Gans would hold his nerve an' that he was a good bluffer.

"It seems to me," he says, "that you know a —— of a lot."

"It's my business to know," the stranger replies. "What I don't learn first hand, I have agents to inform me. I'm a cattle man myself, though my experience has been mostly on the great pampas of South America."

"Waal," says Gans, sorter drawley-like, takin' the stranger at his words, as it were, "if you come up here messin' in my business, I kin promise you that you won't git no *pamperin'*. If you don't know the road out of this neck of the woods," he went on, cockin' an' lowerin' the hammer of his forty-five, in a absent-minded sorter way, "I'll take pleasure in settin' you right."

"Do not misunderstand me, Mr. Bradley," the stranger replies. "The object of my visit is strictly business. I am here to offer you a better deal for—er—your cattle than you are figurin' on makin'. The thing in the nut-shell, as the monkey said, is this: I have a boat anchored in the river down at Mobile. I wish to load a hundred

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and fifty head of cattle for England. I will buy these cattle from you an' pay you twenty dollars a head. It is fifteen dollars a head cheaper than I can buy them on the market, but five dollars better than you could get from the buyer in the next county. When your barge is loaded, a tug will come up the river an' tow it down to my vessel. The cattle will be loaded on to the vessel with slings during the night an' the barge returned to you the next day. Each night I will take down a load of fifty head, until I get what I want. The money will be paid to you for the cattle as soon as they are put on the barge. Is it a bargain, Mr. Bradley?"

For a full minute Gans stood lookin' that there Dig over, from his slouch hat to the spurs on his heels. Then he clears his throat an' begins—

"How'm I to know that you—that you——"

"That I'll tote square?" the stranger catches him up. "As an evidence of my good faith I'll pay you right now half the money for the first consignment. I have here my check-book an' an indelible pencil. I'll give you a check for five hundred dollars."

"Never mind," says Gans, as the stranger takes a little long book out the inside pocket of his coat. "I can't write."

"Why I'll write the check myself," says Dig, surprized like.

"That wouldn't do no good. I couldn't read it," Gans informs him. "An' I don't want no papers writ nohow. You jest have the money there when I git the cattle on the flat, or you don't git 'em. An' if you start any monkey business with me, I'll put a bullet into you, if I has to foller you plum' to them pamphlets you spoke of."

"There'll be no hitch, Mr. Bradley. May I make one suggestion?"

"What is it?"

"You may need mo' help in gittin' but these cattle. Are there any others," eyein' us three on the bench, "who you kin depend on to—er—help you?"

"Not in this neck of the woods," Gans returns. "They was one other; but he 'lected to hold himself fancy an' went off. But that's my part the business. You jest have the money ready."

"One of my men will be up on the tug tonight, an' he'll have a thousand dollars in gold for the first fifty head."

"Boys," says Gans, turnin' to us, "you heerd what this here man has said. There'll be fifteen hundred dollars to divide twixt the three of you, when we git out them hundred an' fifty head."

"But Gans," Jo begins, hitchin' at his britches.

"But, ——!" Gans interrupts him. "They ain't no but's. You all will take orders from me, with nothin' to say. An' we better be movin'."

"I would suggest," says the stranger, in that doleful tone of hisn, "that you go by an' see the sheriff an' tell him you are on yo' way to the south end of the county to look after somethin'. That would give you a good alibi."

"Ain't no use in that," Gans says, uneasy-like, "he's sick an' I don't want to bother him."

"Can't help it if it does bother him," the stranger replies. "It mought be worth yo' while. You're not afraid to face him, are you?"

In course that struck Gans where the hide was thinnest an' he comes right back:

"Who, me? 'Fraid of old Gabe Patterson? Waal I reckon not. I been runnin' this here county for the past two year. In course, if you say so, I'll go by an' tell him I'm headed the other way."

"I think it would be best," the stranger says, quiet-like.

We went outside then an' got our hosses, leadin' them down the hill a piece to where the stranger had a hoss tied to a dogwood.

"Ain't that Sol Duggan's mare?" Gans asked, stoppin' sudden, when he catches sight of the critter.

"I believe that's the name," the stranger answers. "I hired the hoss for a week. Why?"

"Oh, nothin'," Gans replied. "Only, a good part of them cattle we figgerin' on gittin' out the swamp belongs to Sol."

WE THREE an' Dig turned from the road down by a little holler 'bout a quarter 'fo' we got to the sheriff's place an' waited while Gans rid on to make his alibi. Every now an' so often a shiver would pass over Jo an' his teeth would knock together. I felt much the same way, an' Pete, likewise, was lookin' pale aroun' the gills.

Dig looks us over an' produces a bottle from his hip pocket. He passes it first to Jo.

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"Take some," he says. "You need it."

Jo holds up the bottle an' eyes it doubtful, as we wasn't much hands for drinkin' licker.

"That's hundred proof nerve restorer," Dig says. "Take a few swallers."

Jo does so an' passed the bottle to me. I sampled it an' passed it on to Pete. An' I must say that very shortly after that there burnin' stuff run down my goozel my sperets begins to rise. I feels like I don't give a whoop in —— for nothin', an' says so.

When Gans rides down the hill to jine us agin, his face was white an' his mouth jerky.

"He's pretty low," Gans says. "Don't believe he'll last till mornin'. His voice is so weak he can't hardly talk. Maybe—maybe we better call this here job off."

"All the better if he is low," Dig says, heartless, as he passes Gans the bottle. "That sheriff is a dangerous man. I run foul of him once."

Gans looked up at him quick.

"Oh, it was years ago," Dig continues. "He was only a deputy then. I was operatin' up this way, or tryin' to. He got wise an' 'rested me; but they couldn't prove nothin' on me an' had to turn me loose. I feel better that he ain't liable to be stirrin', though I wouldn't trust him."

Gans killed the bottle an' th'owed it in the bushes. When the color had sorter come back in his face, we rid on crost the woods.

Enterin' the swamp by an old road, we come after while to Pender's Gap. Here Dig unsaddled his hoss in a little open space in the swamp, not fur from where a spring bubbled out the ground. The rest of us scattered an' begin pickin' the cattle up here an' there in the swamp an' drivin' them to the pen. By good dark, we had better'n fifty head of good fat steers shet up, ready to be driv' to the river. Dig had built a fire. From a bundle back of his saddle he had taken a tin coffee pot an' a cup. The pot was bubblin' on the coals an' givin' off a mighty pleasant smell. Dig had saddled his hoss an' he remarked as how we'd git started for the river soon's we'd refreshed ourselves with a good hot cup of coffee.

Jedgin' by myself, we sho' needed it. The effects of the licker I'd drunk had oozled away, an' my stummick felt like it didn't have no bottom. I set down by the fire an' hung my head. The shivers an' the teeth-knockin' had returned to Jo. Pete looked as bilious as I felt. Gans was mo' silent than I ever knowed him to be. Dig was settin' acrost the fire smokin' a short black pipe that stunk somethin' awful.

That old swamp, outside the firelight, was as black as a pocket, an' to add to the lonesomeness the hoot-owls begin a-hootin' on all sides. One big feller, in a black gum not more'n twenty yards off, went on somethin' scanlous, laughin' up there 'mongst the leaves like a crazy man. A little piece down the swamp, a squinch owl begins his shiverin' holler, like the whinny of a ghost hoss, an' it made the creeps run down my spine like cold spring water.

Of a sudden, in the bushes right at the edge of the little clearin', spoke a voice—

"Put up yo' hands, you varmints!"

The words had come weak an' shaky; but they struck on my nerves like a rosined bow on a tight fiddle string.

"The sheriff!" groaned Gans; an' he fell over backwards off the chunk he'd been settin' on.

His arms an' legs was jerkin', like a dog what's been kicked in the head by a hoss. I thought he was havin' a fit of some kind. An' maybe he were; but when the command come agin—

"Put 'em up!" he sot right up, his legs still hangin' over the chunk, an' raised his hands high as they would reach. Kase Sheriff Gabe Patterson had the repitation of never speakin' but twice. He said he always give the other feller one mo' chance. After that, the chances was hisn.

As for us three, we'd histed our arms at the first order; but that there Dig, drappin' to his hands an' knees, was crawlin' off. His hoss was tied to a young maple in the edge of the clearin,' with the switch of its tail jest showin' in the firelight, an' he'd most reached it. But at the words from the bushes—

"You, there, Dig Alvarez!" he stopped, knelt up an' histed his arms.

Even with the paralyzed feelin' that had come over me, I loosened my breath with relief that the old sheriff had broke his rule an' spoke for a third time, an' that it had been the sound of his voice stid of the roar of his old ten-bore that I had heard.

Then come the orders.

"Git yo' rope, Alvarez. I've—got you—kivered."

The words come slow an' sorter jerky, as

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if with a great effort; but their meanin' wasn't to be mistook. Dig got a half-inch cotton rope that was tied to the back of his saddle an' returned to the fire. He stood with his back to us, strainin' forward, as if tryin' to look into them bushes, waitin' for further orders. An' they come in the next breath.

"Tie their—hands behind 'em. Loop in the—end. Round yo' waist. Link everybody—together. You in front. On yo'—hosses. To my place. I—I'll be watchin' you!"

"It's the voice of a dyin' man," Gans wails. "I knowed it when I see him this evenin'. Come in, sheriff, an' let us help you. We'll go peaceable."

An' that there hard-biled Gans Bradley begins to sob like a baby, retchin' an' jerkin' like he had a spell of the vomiks.

Not a sound come out the bushes—not even the crack of a stick or the rustle of a leaf, an' I for one felt like I was in the shadder of a ha'nt. Dig stood with the rope in his hands, lookin' at it sorter stupid, like, as if uncertain jest how to begin carryin' out them orders he'd received. Then he takes out his knife an' lops off 'bout three-foot of the rope.

He unravels this an' ties the hands of each of us behind our backs with a strand. Then he makes a noose in the end an' puts it about his waist. With the balance of the rope, he linked us together, each several foot from the other.

Now come the job of gittin' on our hosses. I managed by hookin' my chin over the saddle; an' the others got up somehow, all but Jo. He kept right on over, an' fell on the ground on the other side, an' his hoss stepped on him. There was then one mo' —— of a tangle of Jo an' hoss an' rope, till Dig, the only one of us with his hands free, come an' got 'em straightened out an' helped Jo to git on.

Out from that little clearin' we went, linked together like a string of sausages, the bridle of each hoss hung over the saddle pommel of the hoss in front, Dig leadin' the way, me next, the others strung out behind, Gans bringin' up the tail of the procession. Jest befo' we left the swamp road, we got a warnin' from the bushes:

"I'm watchin' you."

An' twice mo,' from a little back on side roads that led into the road we was travelin', we got that same warnin'. The woods was beginnin' to brighten with the light that comes befo' the rise of the moon, an' I creened hard to see. But I couldn't see nothin,' an' I couldn't hear the break of a twig, or the stamp of a hoss. I figgered that the sheriff must've waited till we come up, 'give his warnin', then, after we'd passed, rid through the woods to head us off agin.

The road dipped down through a swampy stretch, where it was darker'n pitch. The rope where it was tied to me begins to jerk, an' by nudgin' up my hoss an' leanin' forward, I could make out that Dig was workin' at it where it was fastened 'bout his waist.

But of a sudden, from right out the swamp on the side the road, there comes that tremblin' old voice; an' it seemed to me it was higher up than from the back of a hoss; from out a tree, sorter:

"You, Alvarez; I'm watchin'—you!"

Gans expressed my own sentiments when he cries out from the end of the line like a skeered goat—

"It's a ha'nt!"

An' he clumps his hoss in the sides with his heels an' rides right up amongst the rest of us, gittin' us all in a sort of a snangle.

For the rest of the way, though we didn't receive no mo' warnin's, Dig's hands didn't stray agin from in front of him.

WHEN we got to the sheriff's place, we 'lighted at the front gate, Jo agin fallin' off his hoss. When we went in an' clumped up on the front gallery, the do' opened with a blind of light streamin' out, an' Miss Hessie, Sheriff Gabe's wife, was standin' there. She was lean an' ga'nt, with thin lips an' a face that didn't show much of her feelin's; but I could see that it was sot in a strange sort of way.

She moved aside an' we filed in an' gathered in a clump in the middle of the room. 'Thout seemin' to notice our condition of bein' tied up the way we was, she went to the bed an' turned down the sheet. An' if there wasn't old Sheriff Gabe laid out. His old hatchet-face had fell away since he'd been sick, till it looked pinched an' drawed. On his eyes was two half-dollars, to weight down the lids. His hands was folded peaceful acrost his breast.

Gans made a chokin' sound in his throat an' I tried to swaller; but it wasn't no use. Then I'm a son of a gun if them peaceful hands didn't unfold, an', puttin' 'em on the

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bed on each side of him, Sheriff Patterson yanked himself up, the half-dollars slidin' down over his face. His eyes opened, an' he set there lookin' us over.

Gans plum' fainted an' fell in the flo'; an' the room begins to circle 'bout my own head, so that I couldn't see nothin' natural. Miss Hessie cried out an' flung her apron over her face; but in that same weak voice that had been directin' us, she got her orders.

"Git the water bucket an' the butcher knife out the kitchen."

An' when she had sprung to obey, an' come back runnin'—

"Cut 'em loose an' sprinkle Gans."

She cut us loose in no time; but it taken nearly the whole bucket of water to bring Gans 'round. An' when she got him to, an' she an' Dig had got him in a cheer, he jest set there, his jaw drapped, his eyes popped as he looked at the sheriff.

The sheriff sot there in the bed for a while, lookin' us over. Then he begins to speak, an' his voice, losin' the weak sound, come in deep, solemn tones, like it was risin' plum' out of his belly:

"Even in death I can't rest. When I'm down an' out, the varmint that has fed outen my hand would stob me in the back. Take off yo' badge, Gans."

Gans tried to do as he was told; but his hands was tremblin' so that he couldn't git the thing loose from his galluses, an' Miss Hessie had to unpin it for him. She handed it to the sheriff, who bent it in his bony fingers, then th'owed it on the flo'.

"Go home to yo' wife an' till the soil," he says to Gans. "You are hardened in the way of iniquity an' the fear of God ain't in you. You're goin' to have one mo' chance; but if, after this, you can't make a man of yo'self, then I'll come an' deliver you into the hands of the Philistines. I'll be watchin' you!"

That sort of Bible talk comin' from a dead man clean got my goat, an' the tears was runnin' down my face. Jo was blubberin' out loud. Pete was cryin' silent, his face all drawed up in a knot. I think Gans tried to make some sorter reply to the sheriff; but there was only a suckin' noise in his throat, an' a sound come up outen him like a death-rattle.

"You boys," the sheriff continues, an' it seems to me his voice has taken on a softer tone, "has erred an' strayed from the way like lost sheep. Go home to yo' folks an' confess."

"You, Dig Alvarez," he says, pintin' his finger at the stranger, "have crossed my path befo.' If ever agin you come up in this neck of the woods——"

He stopped, leaving the rest of it unspoke.

"Now all of you git!" he says, an' lay back down. We got.

When we was on our hosses, Dig rid off in one direction, while us three an' Gans, ridin' clost together in a clump, galloped off down the road in the other.

The moon was now sailin' up in full view; but the shadder of every tree we had to pass under made my flesh creep. We come to Gans' place first, an' acrost his field, all growed up in oak-shrubs an' persimmon-shoots, we could see a light a-shinin' in his cabin.

"She's a-waitin' up for me, boys," he says with a kinder joyful shout, an' turnin' up the lane to his gate, he left us at a run.

Pete's place was the next we reached, an', without waitin' for no invitation, me an' Jo turnt in with him. We put our hosses in the barn an' crope into the house through a winder, so's not to rouse the folks. Pete had two mattresses on his bed an' we put these on the flo', side by side. Then we taken off our britches an' lay down, leavin' the lamp burnin.'

I was plum' wore out an' drapped off immediate; but it seemed like I'd not more'n got my eyes shet befo' Jo begins to have a nightin'-mare. He was settin' up with his arms histed over his head, his eyes bucked, an' yellin' over an' over:

"I got 'em up, Mister Ha'nt! I got 'em up!"

Me an' Pete smothered him with a piller to stop the noise he was makin' an' final got him woke up. It seemed like we hadn't been sleep no time; but out on the fence a dung-hill rooster was crowin', what Pete said always crowed sharp at three o'clock. So we got up an' went out in the kitchen an' made a pot of coffee an' set down to talk things over an' wait till daylight.

"If I'd only had the guts to stan' up an' quit 'fo' I got started, like Len Donovan done!" says Jo. "I wanted to, but y'all wouldn't make no move."

"I was thinkin' the same 'bout you two," I says.

"So was I, 'bout you fellers," says Pete.

At good daylight, we saddled up an' sot

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out on the road for the sheriff's place, seemin' sorter drawed there. We jest couldn't git nothin' straight in our mind 'bout what had happened the night befo', an' we made the excuse to each other that we was in duty bound to go an' help Miss Hessie with the obseequises.

It was one of them pretty mornin's in early Spring, all warm an' dewy, with the little leaves jest beginnin' to show a sorter cream-colored green on the trees. When we come to Gans' place, we seen him an' his wife out in the field near the road. From the oak an' persimmon-shoots that had been grubbed up an' already was wiltin', he must have been workin' there all night in the light of the moon. He stood with the handle of a grubbin'-hoe restin' agin him, drinkin' from a bucket of coffee an' gnawin' a sandwich of biscuit an' fried egg his wife must've brung him from the house. We waved an' hollered; but he didn't even turn his head. But his wife, a skinny little tow-headed woman, looked up an' smiled an' waved back; an' her face was filled with a sort of peaceful joy an' quiet that I can't find words to tell about. But it was like when the church bell has been a-ringin' in the evenin', an' stopped, an' the sound is still a-throbbin' in the air.

When we rid up in front of the sheriff's gate, we sudden drawed in our hosses an' set with our mouths open; for if he wasn't settin' there on his front gallery, drinkin' his early mornin' coffee! It was not till we heerd him call to Miss Hessie to bring out the pot an' three mo' cups, that he had comp'ny, that we 'lighted an' hitched to the fence, then went in an' set on the edge of the gallery with our feet hangin' over.

"Good mornin'," said the sheriff, cheery an' hearty.

"Good mornin', " we replies; but it don't sound like my voice that's speakin'; an' Jo has to clear his throat twist 'fo' he gits out—

"How you feelin'?"

"Spry as a two-year-old," the sheriff comes back. "I'll be out an' straddled my hoss in a day or so. Where's Gans?"

"Workin' in his field," Pete replies. "From the looks of things, he must've been workin' there ever since—ever since he got home last night."

The sheriff sorter laughed to himself.

"Ain't no better way to git devilmint an' meanness out of a man than to sweat it out."

Feelin' that it was now my time to say somethin', I remarked—

"Uncle Gabe, in course we know in reason that it couldn't of been so; but we jest can't git the straights of it."

"You're talkin' tongue-tied, Wes," he replied.

"Wasn't you dead?" I busts out then.

He laughed so that he spilt hot coffee on his britches leg an' swore good an' hearty.

"In course I wasn't dead," he said. "You boys have got sense enough to figger that out."

"But we hearn yo' voice," Jo declared. "It was there at Pender's Gap, an' along the road comin' here. We can't git that part of it straight."

"Oh, I sont my voice down there in the swamp an' rounded you fellers in. That was easy."

"But—but—but—" Pete begins; but he can't git no farther than the "but," an' sets there shakin' his head.

Jest then Miss Hessie come out with the pot an' poured our coffee. We had sweetened an' stirred 'fo' the sheriff leaned over in his chair an' said in a confidential tone:

"I'm goin' to take you boys in on this; but I want you to keep it dark. Gans is ignurunt an' superstitious, an' I believe his experience last night will keep him straight—at least till he gits a foot-holt on himself, when, with the help of his wife, he'll be all right. That there South American what butted in with y'all yesterday ain't no South American at all. He's Dig Helverson, Hessie's brother, who runs a little fish an' oyster eatin'-place down in Mobile. Years ago, though, when we was boys, he lived up here, an' many's the time we've herded cattle together. 'Fo' I was taken sick, I had begun to suspect that things wasn't goin' jest right hereabouts, an' I sont for him when I was down an' put him on to the job. Workin' quiet, an' keepin' out of sight, he got the lay of the land. He's keen as a briar, an' Gans didn't stand no show at all. He made a good job of what he sot out to do."

"But was you there, too?" Jo asked. "We hearn you, plain as day."

Again the sheriff sorter laughed to himself.

"No," he says. "Dig is one of these here ventrilokist fellers, with the knack of makin' his voice come from different places. He always was good at play actin' too;

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an' I reckon he carried it off right well, mockin' my voice. Me an' him an' Hessie made up the death-bed scene, an' we done that well, too, if I do say it myself. Dig's back in the kitchen now, if you'd like him to give a exhibition of ——"

But we all three was on our feet, protestin' violent.

"No, sir; for ——'s sake, Uncle Gabe," says Jo, beginnin' to tremble.

We each rid home an' confessed the whole thing to our folks. In course they give us ——; but we expected that, feelin' that we deserved it. Pa he cussed an' threatened to give me a cow-hidin', old as I was. Ma she cried an' made me git down on my bended knees an' pray with her. An' in course I blubbered. Put my head right down in her lap an' groveled an' wepted an' plum' spiled her clean apron. Then she honeyed me; an' pa went out an kilt a shoat an' we had backbone stew an' chit'lin's for dinner. I felt better, inside an' out. It was like histin' the shade an' lettin' the sunlight into a dark room. From what Pete an' Jo said, they had very much the same experience. The owner hadn't never missed the two steers an' spotted yearlin' we'd driv' off, so Jo's pa bought 'em offen him, an' we dug up the money we'd got for them an' buried, an' reimbursted him.

As for Gans, he must've got that there foot-holt on himself the sheriff spoke of; an' it never slipped. It got to be his pride that, every season, he gathered the first roastin'-years an' grabbled the first taters in the settlemint; an' he always taken a mess down to the sheriff.

MOTHER of BEGGARS

A Complete Novelette by SIDNEY HERSCHEL SMALL

Author of "The Inn of the Silkworm Moth."

BROODING heat and the quivering white sunshine of the Summer solstice oppressed the village of Hishiura, and Gilbert Clark stepped out of the dankly hot alley on which his mission house stood, with a gasp of true relief. He was always vaguely glad of the Shinto temple-yard which he must traverse, for its beauty and detached calm. It suggested nothing limited nor stunted—despite the tiny trees—but vastly vigorous sensations. In the rock pool enormous whiskered carp sprang out of the water with a shower of sapphire drops as they pursued green-winged flies, and the water showed large circles, concentric from the upward lunge and downward drop, which died away gently toward the shore. Crows exchanged their sinister signals among the few larger trees, and from time to time flew languidly from one to another.

In the more delicate and shaded light, air and water seemed to vibrate unceasingly; great dragon-flies flecked the transparent depth of the pool; under a rock rabbits caressed their ears with the sleek grace of

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cats; birds flashed their jewelly plumage with shrill cries which—Clark thought—vibrated in time to the heat-waves.

He stepped along the large flat stones of the courtyard, absolutely alone, for the priests rose late in the hot season, passed the innumerable waterways dryshod, about the shore of the facsimile lake with its enchantingly cool shores, the tranquil mirror of the miniature world. Suddenly an alley in the shubbery brought him in sight of a building of dull-pink bricks, with heavy mass and definite outlines. His spell was broken, and the dream melted away.

Clark tried vainly to bring it back; shut his eyes tightly and actually achieved the vision of the lacquered dolphins on the temple cornices waggling their flame-colored tongues.

The crows set up a discordant clamor, as harsh as the rasp of a much-played phonograph needle—*caw-caw-cawrrrr.*

"I am going, I am going right away," Clark laughed at their protest, and immediately his face sobered, as if the departing brought poignant regret.

That this change in expression was not from the departure from the shaded garden was obvious from his thoughts.

"Hearfield may be a disagreeable fellow personally, but he would never permit another white man to be jailed in these horrible Hishiura bamboo cages. Out in the sun. It would kill a man. Of course he will not. I listen too much to native gossip. I——." His face lightened, and he puckered his mouth to a noiseless whistle as he walked toward the consulate, that pink-brick building which shouldered aside the thatched huts. A house-boy opened the door for him, and the missionary sat fairly at ease in one of the prison-made Bilibid chairs.

Hearfield, the consul, was—as Clark said—of none too agreeable nature. He was awake, although still in bed, and was never so unlovely as at this hour, and never so ungracious. In this, on this morning, he cannot be blamed. He had spent the previous day in securing business data for some firm in the States. A long neglected task, shoved into action by information that the home department had been appealed to—and at a time he desired little to leave Hishiura. But what can a man do, under such circumstance? And so he had gone up-country after the source of *habutae*, *kutani* pottery, *makie* lacquer, and even patent-medicine supplies. This was bad in itself. The return to Hishiura was worse.

It had consumed most of the night. The best of the sleeping part, and Hearfield liked to sleep. There was not a sleeping-car on the train, and he was compelled to spread a blanket from his bag on the floor; there was not even room to stretch at full length.

He arrived at Hishiura at four in the morning. Sleepy, damp, and very tired. A hot bath. Bed. His own. Scotch-and on the table near by—and now this confounded Clark downstairs, after something or other. The missionaries always wanted something or other. They never got it, true, but they wanted it. With a volley of curses he hurled from the door the boy who announced Clark.

As he dressed—slowly, to keep Clark waiting—he thought bitterly that being a consul was not all people believed it was. What with reports to be made, and that prying Clark man, and now the fact before him—according to official regulations, —— it—that he must be present at the formal arresting of that white man, that bum, that beachcomber, that ne'er-do-well and thief, that Kingsley—no, being a consul was not all that the comic operettas made it to be in the Orient. However, he brightened at the remembrance that the tourists at Hishiura were almighty pretty, especially the little Potter girl.

She was a bit lean o' the leg, but otherwise wholly delectable. There had been, now, a story that she had been once engaged to Kingsley: had attempted to straighten the fellow out. Bah, that was a story. She, and her party, were making Hishiura their headquarters during their north-Japan trip. There would be temples in the moonlight, and boat-journeys in the mountain lakes, and—no, the consul business was not so bad.

He ordered his coffee brought into the reception-room: eating and drinking would set Clark more on edge; show him that he was interrupting.

THE missionary rose from his chair so quickly that it toppled over, and Hearfield was pleased to the point of laughter at the other's chagrined expression.

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"I wanted to see you," Clark blurted into his task.

"You do, my dear Clark, you do," Hearfield retorted, and was very pleased with that.

Clark blushed. He knew that—after—he would have thought of cutting retorts for that banality, but now none suggested itself. And so he must make matters worse:

"You look cool and comfortable this hot morning," he said conversationally.

"Cool? Comfortable? My dear man, are you blind? I was up all the night. Traveling. Important government business. I am miserable. Where are your eyes? And I've a good bit of report to write. What do you want?" He smothered the "now" somehow.

The other patted his finger-tips together.

"I expect I am a good bit of a fool—what?—I thought you said something?—I say I am foolish, Hearfield, for I have been listening to gossip. They say the local authorities caught poor Kingsley—I know him, that is I went to see him once, and—" ruefully—"he kicked me out—and are going to imprison him for snatching some food. That may be true, for he hasn't any money. But of course you'll exercise your authority, and prevent it? It is some petty thing—possibly you hadn't even heard of it."

"I heard it. That is why I am consul here. There is little that concerns my people that I am not aware of, Clark."

"Doubtless, doubtless. I did not mean it the way it must have sounded. Of course you will interfere?"

Hearfield smiled slightly as he sipped his coffee.

"I leave that to the missionaries."

"Yes, yes. We—" Clark flushed with discomposure as the meaning struck him. He added quietly—"My coming, then, is naturally unnecessary, for you have already taken steps to vouch for Kingsley."

"Why should I? He is a thief. He was caught. He is totally without funds. He needs a lesson."

"There was once a thief——"

"Don't hurl biblical quotations at me!"

"It isn't a quotation," Clark assured him. "I was simply reminding you——"

"I need no reminders. And I am busy this morning. Can I do anything else for you?"

Having done nothing, he grinned as he lit a cigaret.

Clark blinked.

"I do not understand exactly. You mean you will see to it that Kingsley has a lesson, but he will not be caged in the sun?"

"He will have his lesson!"

"That—possibly it will do him good. I am very glad that you will not let them prison him. The sun out at the jail is terrible! Thank you, Hearfield. My mind is easier."

"His lesson will be given him in the bamboo cages you talk about," easily.

"But you said ——"

"Look here, Clark," the consul interrupted angrily. "Isn't it enough that I've got to go out to that cursed *eta* village where the fellow lives, and have him whine to me for protection——"

"He won't!"

"Whine to me for protection," Hearfield insisted heatedly, "and be forced to do my duty and refuse it, for the regulations say clearly that a white man must be vouched for, and I cannot—and miss a whole morning, and most of the afternoon, when I already had an engagement——"

He thought of the tea-house visit he had planned with one of the ladies of Miss Potter's party, and sighed gustily.

"If I vouch for him——"

Hearfield let the thought sink in. What difference did it make? The blossoms would be thick about the little country inn where he intended taking the ladies. The more elderly would be satisfied with the wide river-hanging veranda, but Miss Potter would wish to explore the waterfall, and the dim underbrush of scarlet-flowering shrubs. Suddenly he wondered what it would be like to kiss a white girl again——

"Well?" he said.

"If I vouch for him? Will that do?"

"You must deposit a hundred yen, gold. Of course, that can only be done with my permission." He became virtuous with: "Possibly it is better so. Have you got the hundred yen in gold?"

"Why, I believe that I have," Clark said happily. "At all events, I can get it. Shall I——"

The missionary stopped as Hearfield's house-boy sidled into the room, with preliminary hissing breath to announce his coming. The consul snatched an envelope from the boy's hand, tore it open, and let his eyes greedily read:

Warren Kingsley dead stop nephew willed ten dollars stop balance estate Blanche Potter stop inform both.

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"It cannot be done," he told Clark vehemently. "I was swayed by my desire for merciful action. The regulations say clearly that the vouching must be done by the consul upon payment of the hundred yen gold, provided the consul believes that such action is desirable. I do not believe, upon sober reflection, that it is. I know it is not. Goodbye, Clark—I have serious work ahead——"

Clark blinked again.

"I do not understand," he said mildly. "You already said that I might—I do not understand," he concluded futilely.

"You don't have to—forget it—you'd be better off if you tended to the stinkin' native souls!"

"I do," Clark reminded him. "That is, I try to, you know."

"Then try some native who needs soul balm, and give it to him. Out of a bottle. They like it better that way! Now, won't you do that? As for Kingsley, I'll look after him. Some of the evil will broil out of him when he is jailed! You can depend upon me to look after him, Clark."

"I can depend upon his losing his manhood, when the village urchins pelt him with garbage," Clark said, warm at last. "I can depend upon the poor fellow cursing his Maker, and you, and me, and all his people, and—and—" Clark licked his lips —"I'm going, Hearfield. If it were not specifically stated that a man may not use some things in vain, I would say—I would say—" his words stumbled, tripped, and he fell silent.

Why couldn't he have turned, left, with that, he wondered? No, he must wait until Hearfield had done that very same thing, so that he himself must stumble and trip from the room as his words had done before. Hot words filled his mouth. Suddenly he was filled with an uncontrollable desire to slap the man's mean mouth—the swine, the unmentionable swine—the beauty was gone from the Shinto temple-yard as he hurried back as he had come to the mission-house.

HEARFIELD himself was in high good-humor. Back to his room, where he selected a new cravat from his last order from Tokio; had there been time he would have donned the suit of tweeds from the States, but he was anxious and rushed; as it was he consumed minutes in deciding against a sun-helmet; it looked so foreign and was so becoming, but was unclayed—no, the sun-helmet would not do.

"*Kurumal*" he roared on the stairs, as if it had not been waiting for an hour, with the *kurumaya* between the shafts.

The little official emblem on the side entranced him, as it always did. He mounted the little cart, and leaned back as far as he dared, drawing his face into a judicially grave expression as fitted the occasion, and lighted a cigar. In spite of himself he gave every appearance of a cat before a hole without outlet, and with a plump rat inside. Possibly the boy was hurrying as ordered, possibly he was malicious in intent; at all events Hearfield was forced to clutch the sides to keep from falling as the vehicle whirled with a great clatter into the inn-yard, where the women were staying. It rather spoiled the effect, but none of them were on the veranda, so what matter?

"Ready?" he shouted as he jumped down, although none were in sight.

As he entered the inn, and saw them, he repeated the word:

"I've a trip for you this morning, before we go to the tea-house. A real exciting excursion. To an *eta* village. Pariah place. Interesting. Few whites ever get in. I can. Officially. We will have to walk. No rick'shas permitted. And—" he could hold it back no longer—"remember one of you asked about Arthur Kingsley? Well, his uncle's dead. Cut'm off penniless. Hard lines, what?"

"I believe that Blanche cabled Mr. Kingsley. About Arthur. She might well have saved her money and trouble, but she is so good-hearted." A satisfied look on the speaker's face. "I could have told her, but she did not ask my opinion. Blanche will be shocked. Arthur's uncle thought a good deal of her. He was very wealthy. We always believed that he would remember her. Of course that was not in the cable?"

"Official business only, Mrs. Shearer."

That could not be called a fabrication. Anyhow, the department did not want its affairs broadcasted by a flock of cackling women.

"Where's Miss Potter?" he asked abruptly. "We are all ready. Will one of you summon her, please?"

"Blanche isn't in the hotel," Mrs. Shearer told him. "All of us—Miss Patton and

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Miss Anderson and Mrs. Partridge and Mrs. Hayden—we had a late breakfast. She was gone when we came down."

"Gone? Where?"

"She told one of the boys that she intended going to the mission."

"What for?"

"I do not know. That is, not exactly, Mr. Hearfield. But it seems, from what I could gather from the table-boy, that somebody told her something, and she became quite excited. So she went to see Mr. Clark about whatever it was."

"What good will that do?" Hearfield roared. He lowered his voice in explanation. "It is a little matter that she is best out of. Clark could not help her, although I might have."

"Mr. Clark is not my idea of a missionary," the woman said. "He thinks more of their brown bodies and comfort than he does of—no, he is decidedly not my idea of the proper man for a foreign mission. Dr. Eaton, now, who lectured at the Improvement Club, said that——"

"We have got to wait," Hearfield fumed. "What can the soul-doctor do? It makes me very enraged indeed. It—it——"

He missed the actress for the stage he had set.

"Tell me," he said, after he had found a chair, and thrown a *zabuton* from the floor to it for greater ease, "tell me, was there anything to the report—I heard it at the club, in Tokio, I think—that Miss Potter came to Japan to—to see Kingsley? Was there?" he demanded, as if answer were refused.

"A boy-and-girl affair, perhaps, years ago," Miss Anderson informed him, pleased that he had directed his explosive question toward her. "A mere trivial thing. Oh, nothing to speak of. Blanche is tender-hearted, and she felt badly when Arthur—you know what he did, how he gambled, and drank—but that is over long ago. Blanche needs settling. She has no mother, you know, and no father. She needs some one ——"

She smiled so patiently at Hearfield that, despite himself, he touched a finger to the new cravat and smiled back.

Bit by bit, under the consul's none-too-skilful queries, he became certain that here was accident, and nothing premeditated. Kingsley's uncle had paid for Miss Potter's share of the trip, as a sort of reward for trying to keep Arthur Kingsley straight. The route was made up by all of them, and Blanche had acquiesced. If there was anything at all to the story, he would soon squelch it. When she returned he'd take them all to the *eta* village, and show her what sort of beast Kingsley was. He might even suggest a trip to the jail, when the fellow was caged. He might—might do many things. He brightened visibly. Lord, and he'd almost made love to that old school-teacher, the one with the pinchy nose, for the—he didn't even *think* "money" that she had——

He liked the conversation on the veranda, especially that of Brewster-bodies, and the relative merits of Lancias and Mercedes, and the dance for Henry Outcalt's débutante daughter—the time passed quickly, but Blanche Potter did not return. He forgot his displeasure at Clark, although he was thoroughly aware that at some time or other he would square the count—he was tired of this interference. However, when the Potter girl discovered that he, Hearfield, might have done what Clark was asked to do and could not, it would make her feel his position. She was very friendly. He knew that. And a consul may become an ambassador—and she was pretty—she certainly was pretty.

They started at last, with Hearfield in the lead like a bandmaster. Had they gone steps faster, had Mrs. Partridge not stopped to admire a sweet 1920-made bit of very ancient lacquer holding an equally-modern vase properly aged to appear as Fourth Shogunate, they would have met the girl herself and her escort Clark right at the bridge which is the entrance to the *eta* village. As it was, the other two were already behind the first turn, not forty feet ahead, but as concealed in the twisted street as if they had been miles. The bridge was gay with paper-flowers and sprays of real blossoms, with ideograph-inscribed petitions to Kishibōjin, Mother of Beggars, from the wealthy members of the Hishiura community; not that the poor be freed from their torment, but that they, the *narijin*, the new-rich, be withheld from ever being forced to a similar place.

This Hearfield explained, at a question from one of the women.

"It is the same the world over," Mrs. Hayden proffered. "The basis of religion although"—unctuously—"the prayer must

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be offered to the proper Person. I mean that humble prayer will keep us in—in—I do not express myself as well as you diplomatic corps men, Mr. Hearfield!—in that position in life to which we belong. Do you not agree?"

Mr. Hearfield, the final words of the cable clear and black before him, agreed vehemently.

"It is delightful to meet a cultured woman such as you," he said smoothly, carried quite beyond himself. "What one suffers in such a place as Hishiura can only be vaguely imagined. Of course, a missionary—Clark, for example—but for one like——"

He did not say, "myself," but as his feet left the bridge waved his hand grandly.

The tourists all nodded their heads, thinking that it was a shame that a man like Mr. Hearfield should be confined to a tiny place like Hishiura, when even the Nagasaki consul couldn't tell them the name of the tea-house somewhere in Japan that was too delightful—the one where rice-cakes were served shaped like lotus-leaves—but must rumble off instead about idols and gods one might read of, or even see at Vantines'. They thought of writing home about it.

Head went to head once:

"If Blanche only would! He'd be an ambassador, at least. And she seemed to like him. He's so steady. And such a manner!"

Handkerchiefs went to noses as the first offal-odor of the village swirled about them, and they continued mincingly along the crooked ways after Hearfield. It was a thousand pities that hut after hut and street after street had quickened and sped about more important business than the village had known for months—they would not have missed these *seiyo-jin* women, but have lined the shacks in a stew of curiosity. Here would have been a something to talk about, and a something to dream of, by the horns of Jizo! The *seiyo-jin* would not have walked so quickly nor so rapidly after Hearfield, as he threaded his way toward the street—the alley—where he expected to find Kingsley. They neared it, and found each path, each crooked way, echoing silence, and went the faster for that.

THERE is usually nothing to arise for in an *eta* village. Awakening, you know yourself hungry, and hungering may seldom eat. If there be millet or rice, where the charcoal with which to cook? And having means of fire, who can keep the rats and mice from the treasured grains? It is better—having a precious sen or two—to go into the town of Hishiura itself, and fill with hot *soba* at a buckwheat-shop. Or to think of the delightfulness of coming food, of an extended stomach, and so doze hours longer until the time for the middle meal.

But on this morning of the festival of Kishibōjin, Mother of Beggars, a street in the *eta* village—Way of the Chaste River, but this has fallen into disrepute by very non-usage, since the river is sopped up for the cooking-pots by the people of Hishiura many streets above—awoke with a leap rather than by yawning and stretching. And scratching. The street was never lovely, but never—as the consul of Hishiura thought—so unlovely as upon arising.

Being where it was, in an *eta* village—place of pariahs, unapproachable outcasts, some of whom are samurai descendants who prefer hours of life to eternal fame—and what it was—the dreariest way in the village, mud-walled huts crowding into a six-foot passage; walls perforated with holes, although mud of an unbelievable stickiness was heavy in the street for the scooping—little was made, less sold, and work unthought of. Talk, even, was often discarded as requiring too great an effort. Talk of everything save food.

Within the hovels men and women usually kenneled at this hour of the Hare—eight—doing nothing. Now—at the time when Clark awaited Hearfield in the consulate—they crowded into the street, ringed about by that concrete evidence of idleness, children.

Kimonos hung from house-top to house-top to dry. Ancient heaps of refuse marked every door, ill-smelling in the hot Summer air. Never a banneret-zigzagged strip of paper before an open panel, nor lantern, nor paper flower, to be had at ten for the rin. The Way of the Chaste River—to give it name, where rightly it has none—was not concerned by the festival. They would, true, be gently touched by it before the day was out, but who cares to watch a scattering of *narifin* in the streets dispensing such largesse as they did? Can you eat a painted post-card? or sell it, for that matter? The day when one filled his paunch on holidays was past.

Yet the street was undeniably awake,

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alert, and held increasingly so by fascination.

Ten streets or so away, on the other side of the outcast village, trees were gloriously green, as if the sore of an *eta* village had no being. Shopkeepers set up stalls for the expected crowd, in which to serve V-glasses of shaved-ice flavored with almond-extract. The leaf-curtain was ready, the performance would begin promptly on time, the bright kimonos of carmine and vermilion-and-black of the tea-house *geisha* were being scented with *ylang-ylang:* all for the festival of Kishibōjin, who must be propitiated. But of the outcast village, only a few *geta*-menders, who nightly howl their, *"Nao-o-oshi naoshi!"* through Hishiura, knew—or cared, for that matter—of this.

But another performance was to be played in the Way of the Chaste River, possibly a comedy, since many of the actors walked in a fog. And this brought the *eta* out. One of the actors was already on his way; a short stout Japanese who perspired freely as he walked, and who now and again rubbed his chin with a powerful hand as if something vexed him. Vex him it did, as he proved with his muttered:

"I will know soon enough. Assuredly I will know. Too soon for my comfort, perhaps."

He would indeed.

In an earthen-floored hut, which ran muck in the Spring when the snows melted, in this hut and on the very street of the Chaste River, the stage was being set.

Whether or not Arthur Kingsley had slept the night is of little importance. But when the first of the villagers crept into the dark street, curious, noses wriggling like rabbits', he saw them come. Saw them, and yet for all his months in the hovel, did not recognize them now.

He wished, impotently, for the round, placid face of Clark; wished for companionship. Why had he told the fellow to get out? why indeed? for now he wanted him. Didn't they say of Clark that he was a fighter? Not a regular missionary, but a man? Possibly, if he might speak with Clark, everything would come out all right—but he couldn't—or wouldn't.

The sight of a man other than a rascal in the grip of an utterly evil spirit, as Kingsley was now, shuddering in a cold stare, can never be pleasant, and the peeping *eta*, making use of the *shoji*, shrank from what they saw. Kingsley now leaned against the wall; once he moved, and wiped his forehead. Smoothed his hair.

As the street slowly filled the white man set about a peculiar business. Whatever he was about—and he seemed to be acting a part with consciousness—he did with extraordinary care, down to the discarding of his tattered rag of a kimono for one more torn and dirty but looser about the shoulders. He ascertained by a few wide, swinging gestures that it gave free play to his arms. Pulled off his shoes, last vestige of the Occident, whose torn, flapping-sole clatter was familiar to the street, bound on straw sandals instead.

Lastly, very soberly, he took from a pile of quilted rags used as bedding a long and double-edged knife.

He felt its temper, and thrust it into his belt, covering it with folds of the kimono. An aversion to the knife apparently seized him; he moistened his lips, fists worked open and shut, as if he considered trusting to them rather than to the blade. But he made no move to replace the knife in its former hiding-place.

A final hasty sweep of the room with unquiet eyes, and the white man squatted on the floor again.

"What an ending!" he thought bitterly.

A man of medium height, slender, latakia-hued in the face and hands, but even in his kimono-rags more white man than oriental, and more boy than either. His face was—now—singularly expressionless, it had the blank look of concealing a foment of thought crystallized into a definite purpose.

The white man, Arthur Kingsley, waited. The Way of the Chaste River waited also. From the instant of the first whisper, brought to shiver through the street like wind in the reeds, by a street-mender bringing toll to a discarded wife, every man and woman had trembled with ecstatic expectation. It was going to be better than a show, any hour of the eight!

The street-mender had told the tale more than once, but he must recite it again to satisfy them, and did so, adding here and there a bit which came to him in the telling.

"First, the *kurumaya* said to me, 'O most honorable mender of the Imperial streets——' "

" 'Ninth of a pig-litter,' was what he said!" came through the crowd, and the coolie glared about him while the heckler

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was elbowed to the very edge of the throng.

"He said," the coolie continued, still aglare, "he said that the puller told the door-keeper who told ——"

"There are too many of these 'tolds!' Tell the story!" came in the same tone as before, and this time the gathering agreed.

"It is this, then," the coolie mumbled. "King'y-san, who lives with us here, in the house where all died from typhoid before he came, has done something which I do not clearly understand ——"

"Being of small intelligence!"

"Something," unheeding, "which is to take him to prison." He paused to get full value for the statement. "Not to a steamship. Not for return to his own country. To our own jail. The bird is to be caged. Today. This very morning. In moments. The table-boy—I have it now!—heard it, being close, from a *jini-san* * who ate at his table. They agreed that it was good. I think they did, at all events, which is the same thing. Now, women——"

"Our street-mender should be in the temple, studying the 'Forty Precepts for Womanly Conduct!' "

The coolie permitted a curse or two, which heavily involved the others's descendants and forebears, to trickle from his mouth before continuing.

"So, the police will come. Will our white man go? Who can say? We all know what he has done this morning. He is secretive. But he has a knife, although I do not know where he obtained the money for it! And he waits. The police come. Ho! He does not wish to depart. They desire him to go with them. Then we will see something—something"—a gulp of excitement—"and furthermore, having seen a white man fight before, when I was in Osaka on a visit for—for—well, I saw a white man fight, and——"

He got no further, and the last word hung in the air until all of his breath had hissed through his teeth.

The short, perspiring Japanese had crossed the bridge which separates the *eta* from Hishiura, threaded his way along the jagged streets of the village, and reached the huts of the Chaste River. Who saw him first can not be said, but possibly all glimpsed him at the self-same instant, for the indrawn breath of all whistled the coolie's last word into being again.

As the newcomer approached the sound died away.

A path opened before him; not a wide path, nor a straight one, but fan-wise, with the handle at the opposite end. The man halted, and grinned amiably.

"Well, it seems that I am expected," and stopped at that.

All bowed.

"It seems, likewise, that you know who I am."

Bows again, deeper than before.

"That is excellent. It saves words. I dislike talk. It eliminates any necessity of my saying: 'I am Taka. O-Taka-san. Who won the annual sword contest, and sheared through a six-inch block of cross-grained wood. The equal to a dozen necks.' But since you expect me, and know me, as well, for what I am, possibly you understand why I am here, and what I want also. Come. Talk."

The street-coolie shuffled forward.

"For a yen I tell."

The officer blinked at him.

"That I will tell. What you ask. And more."

"What is your name, brother?" Taka asked gently.

"Hatsu."

The officer smiled sleekly.

"Hatsu? First-born? There were assuredly no others?" A wider grin at the coolie's agreement. "I knew it!"

The crowd thrilled, unhearing of the last passage. A yen? A gold yen! Seventy-four glasses of *sake!* Thick brown mugs of sticky, malty *beeru* to be thrown in at no extra cost!—no—do not spend it all for the drink—divide the whole between food and liquor. That was it. Food and liquor. Meat. Pans of boiling fish. Bowls of rice. Even less than a yen was not to be sneezed at. Voices rose, auctioneering counter-clockwise—

"I tell for thirty sen!"

"Twenty-nine and ten rin!"

"Twenty-eight!"

It became impossible to ascertain from whom the bids came, and Taka, the officer, made no move to accept. The price dropped and dropped.

Instead, he scratched his chin again, and smiled, but less pleasantly than before.

"*Hai!*" he grunted, and the bidding stopped, to break out anew, feverishly, as he said nothing more.

* Foreign woman.

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"Be still!" Taka waved his hand in the air. "I have heard enough. The missionary-man has talked to me of some one or other who sold some very great god—or demon, for all I remember—for thirty pieces of silver. Information comes more cheaply these days. I do not like this talk of selling a man's liberty for a matter of eight sen" — the present bid was at that figure— "and the more I think about it the less I like it. As for myself, it is duty. Now—" his face erased of every genial wrinkle—"you, Hatsu, first-born-where-none-would-have-been-better, suppose that you—" grasping him firmly by both outer and under kimono, lest the fellow wriggle away—"take me where the white man lives!"

Hatsu wailed a last plea for even a few copper coins.

"What? I pay? One single sen? *Yoh!* A flea with a thousand legs! A dead, a decaying cat, such as you eat! Come, cow-face, pigling, take me quickly, before I lose control of my tongue! And of my arm!"

And in less time than consumed by the telling both were out of the crowd and nearing the mean hovel where the white man, Arthur Kingsley, awaited them; awaited with tongue moistening dry, fevered lips.

GILBERT CLARK stood in the doorway to his library in the mission-house, raking a hand across the wall, a prey to cross-tides of intent. He had hurried from the consulate, and was mightily out of breath; on seeing his visitor he seemed pleased and yet totally in confusion for a moment. Recovering himself, he murmured some courtesy, jumped as an afterthought to a chair, and sat down. Blanche Potter was already seated, but nevertheless he asked her to sit down, to be comfortable—as if that were possible.

The room was as cheerless, as sedate, as prim as it had been for any of Clark's predecessors, but on the table was a spray of late iris, and the flowers gave the girl courage long before Clark was actually ready to ask what he might do.

She blurted into her business.

"They are going to arrest a white man! Do you know? And can you help? And could you stop it? And what will you do?" All of a breath. "Can you stop it?" she repeated slowly.

"I—I was thinking—if I could."

"It's a rotten shame!"

He had no answer for that. Instead—

"You know Mr. Kingsley?"

She flushed.

"Yes. I do. That is—I did."

"At home? In the States?"

She nodded.

"You came to Hishiura to see him?"

"No. Our party was—simply touring. I didn't know that he was here. If I had, I mightn't have come. Or—or I might. I saw him. In a street. He wouldn't speak to me!"

"No," Clark said, "he wouldn't." Then, "You haven't told me your name. Isn't it Miss Potter?"

They sat silently, until she asked at last—

"What will you do?"

Clark shrugged his shoulders.

"What would you have me do?"

The little missionary hated this answer which was none at all. But what could he do? Where, with what ground, might he interfere? How? With what pretext?

"If I were a man!" The girl voiced the old impotency. "If I were only a man!"

Clark allowed his eyes to linger on the bowl in which the iris were arranged; a bowl of ultramarine and bronze-and-silver, given him by the innkeeper of the Silkworm-Moth—for services rendered; took comfort from it smugly, until the reflection from the polished side showed him himself, a paunched, complacent little man. Instead of discouraging him, the vision seemed to prod him out of all calm, and into a modest gale of gentle anger.

"Well! what do you want me to do?" he retorted. "If you were a man! You might do better as a woman."

He could not call that back; the girl took it up at once—

"How do you mean, Mr. Clark?"

"I—am not certain. I talk too much, Miss Potter."

"That I should appeal to friends at home? I have. And received no answer."

"You want—very much—to keep Mr. Kingsley from the jail?"

Blanche Potter had seen the jail of Hishiura, and it came fresh to her now. The cells open to the air, long cages set on posts. Prisoners never permitted to stretch their legs except for a scant half-hour of exercise—and this forgotten on many days. She visioned Kingsley sitting on his knees, twirling rice-straw into *geta*-strings. In

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rain and wind and snow, and—far more awful—in hot-beating sun. Always twirling the straw, round, round, round—into—into insanity, she thought with sudden fright.

"Very much," she said unevenly.

Clark forced out his thought into words—

"If you saw Mr. Hearfield—he might—he would not for me—but he might for you——"

It came to the girl that here was a situation overly like that in drama—

"You really mean that, Mr. Clark?"

Nor did she need answer. Hadn't Mr. Hearfield been attentive; didn't she recognize "the symptoms"?

"You see a great deal," she told the missionary.

"No," he said quickly. "I know my consul!"

There was no answer to that.

"I do not believe that I would do it," Blanche Potter said clearly. "I would not be afraid—but I would not do it. There—it is probably too late even to think of it." Then she must add, "You know what Arthur—is accused of—and you know what a man will do when he is drinking."

"I know. None better."

"He must have forgotten, when he—stole."

"Aye."

"He stole!"

A nod from the little man.

"I could pay it over and over. So could you. A tiny bit of food!"

"It is not permitted to recompense by payment of the stolen amount in Japan," Clark told her.

"But the consulate—don't they protect white men?"

"I have tried."

"Surely there is some way——"

Clark faced her squarely.

"Way? Of course there was! If I have heard the story rightly, didn't his family, an uncle, I believe, and—some girl—" more slowly—"tell him that he should stay away from the States? Because of this self-same drink? Now—it becomes difficult, after we have judged. Doesn't it, Miss Potter? But now, what can I do? Kingsley is to be arrested at nine. It is nearly that now. I have already done what I may. The officer who arrests him is a friend of mine. We discuss theology together, and I flatter myself that—there, you do not care. Takasan will be very gentle. And kind. Considerate. What more can I possibly do, save to make his period in prison as easy as I am allowed?"

What indeed?

"Why did you not go straight to the consulate?" Clark continued.

"Why? Perhaps because of what you already told me. Mr. Hearfield seems kind, but I did not want to ask—" she reddened—"you know what I wish to say. And—so I heard—Arthur said that Mr. Hearfield was like a cricket, that he chirped about nothing at all, and called it government business. He is! But Arthur shouldn't have said so! Everything in the Orient comes back." She fumbled for words. "And so I came to you."

"Useless, I fear."

"I heard that some time ago you were the victim of a plot. I do not know what it was. That you stopped the practice of making the old native men and women pay for redemption. That you are not like other missionaries. You understand the natives—and all of us—and you can fight—I seemed to need a fighter——" She glanced dubiously at the rotund figure.

Clark jumped from his chair.

A fighter! He could fight, and what was more, he would, if opportunity offered. He had a reputation to maintain. The Fighting Missionary! He reached into the desk-drawer, and carefully drew out an automatic.

"We will go!" he ordered briskly. "Let us see just what is going on in that street where Mr. Kingsley lives. One never knows what one will find."

He blew out his cheeks.

"Are you ready?" Then, slowly, "I am a fool, Miss Potter. You remain here, and I will go. And let me tell you that I will stop at the consulate—if there is time, and Hearfield hasn't gone already to be a witness to the arrest—and remind that man about what was said of forgiving trespasses, and I will also tell him——"

He stopped, since he had little intention of telling him anything as heated as he was about to utter. Indeed, he had no notion of seeing Hearfield at all, although, under stress of artificial excitement, he might have been forced out of himself and gone notwithstanding. He clapped his hands, bringing the house-boy. Before he was able to give an order, the boy said, in English:

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"I find letter. Boy bring. I got. You want?"

"You keep it for me," Clark told him shortly. "And see that the lady is undisturbed, Mura."

He turned to the girl:

"Some local message. I often get them from my people here. There is no steamer due for days, you know. Sit and read. Do something to—to occupy your mind. There are magazines about."

He popped the automatic gingerly into his coat-pocket, thumbing at the safety-catch that it might not go off unaware.

The boy's face was perplexed.

"Undist'd?"

A pause, finger scratching ear.

"Have got in house? What is? Food? Can get if no have?"

Clark explained—

"The lady is to be left alone."

Mura bowed, and sucked in his breath politely through his teeth.

"Letter-stamp can have?" he asked softly.

"Leave it alone! You have plenty of Japanese stamps, Mura. And I need some to send to friends in the States. You see," he explained to the girl, "Mura is collecting stamps. Before that he collected butterflies, and before that cockro—bugs, that is. They all collect something. Now, I am going——"

"Stamp must have," the house-boy insisted.

Clark, at the door, whirled.

"Why? Isn't it a Japanese stamp?."

"Japanese is not!"

"American?" eagerly.

"American is not!"

"Foreign? *Seiyo-jin?*"

"*Seiyo-jin* is not!

"Sometimes, Mura, you distinctly annoy me. What kind of stamp is it?"

"Kind is not. None is!"

Clark patted his finger-tips together. Being standing, the gesture lost any possible force.

"Why did you not inform me that it was a note, a *chit*, a message from some one here in town?"

"Note is not. Letter *is*. Not from Hishiura. Not from Japan. Yellow envelope is. Stamp has not, but has come far. I desire much the envelope permitted to travel without tax-stamp. Can have?"

"Get it!" Clark squeaked, and hurried him across the room with a poking finger.

At the far door the boy stopped, and fished the envelope from his kimono sleeve, grinning. A cablegram. Clark read it, and stuffed both cable and envelope into his pocket.

He turned to Miss Potter.

"I believe that it would be well for you to come with me," he said slowly. "It concerns Kingsley. It does indeed. I wonder if Hearfield's was the same—of course it must have been—but if it was, I did not see why—there, yes, you must come with me. It will not be pleasant, but it will be for the best. Nothing which is for the best can be all pleasant," he added thoughtfully.

"I don't understand," she said doubtfully. "Can't you explain?"

Clark tugged at his watch.

"Soon. It is late now. Almost nine. Taka-san, the officer, will be in the *eta* village by now. Or in minutes. And I really believe that—yes, I can safely say so, it will be better for you not to know. Not yet. Not just yet. Will you come?"

He held the door open for her, and, as it closed behind them, heard the house-boy's wail in the kitchen-quarter—

"Priest crazy is!"

And the cook's retort—

"All men are crazy where a woman is concerned!"

Clark wondered.

As they walked down the hot, dim mission-street Clark glanced now and again at his companion. Her hair was brown, gold-shot of its own virtue, for no ray of sun touched it, nor the mission-street. Her suit was of some harsh fabric simply cut; square at the neck, and from that rose her throat, shot up stalk-stiff which should find in her face its flower. She was not with color, save at the lips; her eyes were gray, youthful, the lashes black. Stiff and severe and straight as her attire was, yet she had grace enough to fill it with life, to move at ease in it; to press it into softly rounded lines. Clark sensed that here was a new thing, this life, this virility; that here was a former automaton now—for the first time—breathing sympathy and understanding, where before it had been what it had been, and nothing more.

"May I speak to him—alone?" she asked.

"Aye. If Taka-san is willing. And he will be, if we ask."

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"Perhaps I can—if he—if Mr. Kingsley —will let me, perhaps I can make things—easier for him."

"Perhaps you can," Clark repeated, litany-like.

His face, had the girl seen it, would have amazed her. It was prim, thoughtful, alert, and consumed at last with anger. Anger that would flare and blaze and burn, that would be the wilder because it came from an ordinarily gentle man, now aroused and unaware of the passion and excitement which seethed within him.

Why, he wondered, had Hearfield shifted so suddenly? The consul had been on the point of permitting Kingsley to be freed from the impending arrest; had received a cable and abruptly changed. Why? Clark trusted none of the consul's motives. The fellow was selfish, mean, petty. Without being thoroughly certain, he believed that Blanche Potter was somehow concerned. How, he did not know. It was certain that the cable had changed Hearfield's mind—but why? He, himself, had received a cable, and doubtless both were alike; why, then had the consul done as he had done? Clark did not know, nor could he figure it out.

The sun had shot through the hot mist from the rice-fields as the man and woman left the narrow street for the courtyard of the temple, from which the principal streets of Hishiura radiate spoke-wise. Priests, late risen, and released by now from the intricate first prayer-hour, strutted here and there, busied beyond measure at nothing at all. True, here and there—at rare intervals—one would cast his eye at the up-twisting outlines of the temple, or at a bit of flowering shrub, or at the vacant sky, and murmur religiously—

"Here—here is purity!"

Others told their beads evenly. At this last duty one fat fellow was most profound. He had discovered that from the end of the prayer-hour to the first *bong-bong* of the morning-rice bell was consumed the quickest by such counting. Forty-six times about the rosary. Forty-six, and then food.

The sun was hot: kimonos were already loosened at the neck, and limbs were luxuriously at the stretch. The great gates seemed to lift wings to the sun. The temple-door was open, open enough to permit Blanche to glimpse the Sun-Goddess' gilding, and, before her, Yatágarásu, the eight-handed crow who is provided as her messenger and attendant, with his red beak and velvety black body.

Clark, with the girl at his side, passed under a candle-flame tree against which an old priest leaned: this one bowed, and muttered a few words in Japanese. Clark colored, and shook his head vehemently. The other laughed shortly, but said nothing more.

"What did he say?" Blanche asked, made curious by the peculiar expression on her companion's face.

"Nothing. Oh, nothing at all. Not a thing of importance."

What the priest had said was this:

"At last you have acquired wisdom. Finally you have taken my advice and have a wife. It is better so. No blossom was made to bloom alone."

Now the missonary must rush into a trot to keep at Blanche Potter's side. She had quickened her step across the flagged courtyard, discovering that many eyes watched her intently, and that here and there mouth went to ear for whispering. She caught nothing of the words, but could not mistake their meaning, nor the faces which caught at the grace of her carriage—she was suddenly eager to speak to Clark, about anything at all.

"It is queer that I have been unable to pick up Japanese. In Italy, or Spain, or even Greece, one can soon understand the simple things."

"There are no simple things in the Orient," Clark told her gravely, as they turned into the long street which narrows to a bridge crossing a dry stream and to where the *eta* live—the pariahs, the street-coolies and sweepers of the temple.

"No," he repeated, the thought of their errand sobering his face to spidery wrinkles about the eyes, the remembrance of the cable puckering them deep, "there are no simple things."

Their steps coincided, but in that thought their minds took diverse paths.

THE *eta* were no more able to resist following Hatsu the street-coolie and his close companion, Taka, toward the place where Kingsley awaited them than they could resist scratching. Had they not waited for this? And talked of it? And conjectured upon it? Were not several rin wagered—future coppers, and not to hand, but did that make the betting less

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intense?—as to the exact spot where the white man, King'y, would thrust his knife?

If Taka was sensate of this he was unconcerned, outwardly. He whistled shrilly some scrap of tuneless rhythm, hand still on Hatsu's kimono-neck, as he neared the hovel. Possibly from the trembling of his captive the officer realized in advance, before any spoken word, which was the place, for he loosed the other, gave him a pinch or two in the fleshy places, and continued the remaining steps alone, unmindful of the cortege in his rear.

At the door-panel of the hut he called loudly:

"Make no mistake, Kingsley-san. It is I. Myself. Taka. The officer. I am alone. I am on business. But I am in no hurry. I am very open to reason and to argument. We will talk it over. If there must be fighting, let it wait until we have talked."

The door was open now.

"Here I come—well—" grinning broadly —"here I am!"

The door closed behind him.

The *eta* shook with expectation.

No sound from the hut.

"The *seiyo-jin* King'y has knifed him!" was the universal belief, dispelled shortly by an ejaculation, loud in tone, from the hut.

"They talk. Then——"

The *eta* folded their wings and waited.

Talk they did, in tones so low that nothing save a "*Yoh!*" or an "*Aie!*" or a foreign word was audible to the straining audience.

"Let us talk softly," Taka opened. "Those *ho-to-to-gisu*, those death-birds, are all listening! Now, to business. If you use the knife you have, it will be clear against all precedents of white-man fighting."

At the other's look:

"Am I a fool? Do you not think I know what these *eta* wait for? What do they care who kills which? I have watched them concerned for long minutes about a spider devouring an insect. I know them. And I like them little enough. In truth I like my task as little. And—" more slowly —"I have a sword, Kingsley-san. And I can use it. I—I seem to be doing most of the talking," he added cheerfully.

Taka examined the walls of mud as if he had never seen one before.

"If you were being taken from a palace, or a tea-house, or a comfortable temple, for that matter, arrest would be more awful to contemplate," he resumed in the same conversational tones. "But I assure you that the prison-rice will be the better by far than that you—took without paying for, and the fish is as fresh as could be expected. Shall we go? I will order the *eta* to disappear. I——"

"I can't go—there," the white man muttered.

"To prison? Is that it? *Yoh!* One of our gods says that there is nothing more admirable than to sever all earthly relations, and still be upon earth. You can do that well in a jail. And Clark-san, your own priest, has told me something of the reward of suffering—so you can take your pick; Carpenter-god, or Hachiman—even Buddha, for that matter, has said——"

"I won't go!"

From this the Japanese saw that nothing good might come, and he started his flow of words again, smooth, flexible, seemingly never-ending; his talk struck the other deeper and deeper into a morose dumbness, and wrinkle after wrinkle appeared in the white man's boyish face, radiating lines of stubborn intent. His eyes glowered now, and his hands became fists.

"He will never use the knife now," Taka thought, and, with that, satisfied at least in part, played his last card.

"It is for you to say," he agreed as easily, as steadily as any of the former inconsequential words. "If we must fight, we will do it as gentlemen. I only say, however"—his eyes, his impassive face, backed up the lie—"I only say that a white woman—" Kingsley blinked—"whom you know is, as you also know, here in Hishiura, and it is probable, since this is the festival of Kishi-bōjin, that she may come to the *eta* village. Her name is——"

"I'll go with you," Kingsley said hoarsely.

He stood up.

"I'll go. Take me round the village, and not over the bridge, where we might meet. I may try to get away—after we're out of here——"

"Good!" Taka said earnestly. "It is better so. We will arrive at the prison in time for you to secure some food from the remains of the morning meal. That is, if you do not escape, eh? You are doubtless hungry, and why not wait until you are out of prison, and fattened up a bit? Then we can fight to your heart's content. Now, have you anything to take with you?"

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Kingsley glanced about the bare room, and started for the door by way of answer.

"I will go first," Taka said hastily. "You after. I trust you."

"Mistake. No one else does."

"In the first Book, near the start, it states that the world is filled with fools."

In that order they left the hut.

Taka was thinking that he should—rightfully—have waited for Hearfield, the consul; it was already nine, and Hearfield had been told of the time. Formalities after, when all was going so well. In the presence of the other white man, Taka was certain that Kingsley would have resisted bitterly.

The Japanese was by no means certain as to what would happen next. It is a proverb that he who would arrest an *eta* must walk with sword before and dagger behind; the *seiyo-jin* was no true villager, yet one never knew. Side by side, now, they stepped into the throng, that gave back slowly and ungraciously. Not far. The street was but six feet wide. Hai! Nothing had happened at all. The white man had a heart of mud.

Rats, aroused, will bite: the *eta* were not at the biting stage, but they could—and did—squeak maliciously. They gave back less and less, until Kingsley and the Japanese were hardly moving. Taka said nothing; this was no time for curses, so he smiled, grinned, and smiled again. For a man of official position he was singularly unannoyed by a chance elbow in his ribs, but none the less alert. Here and there he detected a turning head, a whisper, grunt, and waited for the spark which might become a flame.

Instead, he saw an opening in the press of bodies.

Taka was mindful of his promise to Kingsley, and made no effort to take the opening, which led down the way of the Chaste River and to the humpback bridge, and so it was a long moment before the space closed again, not at once, not nearest the two, but from the far end in. A quick-drawn breath, harsh, from Kingsley, warned the officer.

And so, an instant later, the officer was aware that a white woman, a *jini-san*, and Clark were coming toward them.

"*Aeil*" he heard the *eta* snarl. "The Carpenter-God priest. The black-clad carrion bird. In at the death, as our own."

Kingsley turned away his head.

Taka scratched his cheek.

"I thought that I lied," he told Kingsley, without moving. "I spoke of the white woman to cause you to come without fighting, and now it seems that I spoke truth. This will be a lesson to me. Just exactly what it portends, if coming from the gods, we will soon know. *Hail* Clark-san, I did not expect you,"

A deep bow for the girl, as deep as the press about him permitted.

"This may become one of the sights of Japan not mentioned in the red guide-books, before we are through with it. I was a fool, Clark-san, to have come alone, but you wished it so, for Kingsley-san's sake. That is, possibly. These pigs—" lowering his voice—"these pigs can grunt, but it remains to be seen if they will use their tusks. Now I say—yes, Clark-san?" as the missionary made motions with his hands. "I am listening. I am all attention."

Clark whispered earnestly.

"Ho! but that alters the matter. I agree. We need not wait for Hearfield, who is—as always—late. I did not wait for him before, and will not do so now. Let us get out of this sty. Let us—lips of the Lotus! what have we here?"

They had plenty, it seemed.

Clark followed the officer's eyes. Headed by Hearfield, the tourist-party edged gingerly through the narrow path that was made for them, until they reached the group of four. That all was not well became instantly apparent from Mrs. Shearer's snapped—

"Blanche!"

Clark and Taka turned. Blanche Potter and Kingsley were, of them all, most oblivious to the stage upon which they stood. They were handclasped, like frightened children.

"I was a fool!" the man said brokenly.

"And I, Arthur?" she said. "And I? Was I better?"

"And I," Taka muttered. "For being here. What next?"

"Blanche! Come here!" Definitely a command from Mrs. Shearer.

"He is on his way to jail!" Hearfield called pompously.

"A thief!"

"A jail-bird!"

The throng did not understand this *seiyo-jin* talking. They edged nearer, excited by the loud words. Something might come yet.

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Mrs. Shearer sailed her course differently.

"I have sad news for you, dear child," she said. "Mr. Kingsley is dead. We—that is, Mr. Hearfield, at the consulate—had a cable. It must prostrate you, dear. Come to me, Blanche."

Blanche did not come. Instead, she found herself closer—neither knowing how it happened—to Kingsley, and his arm about her. Clark beamed at them both, and patted his finger-tips together happily.

"The Japanese do not understand such things as this, as brotherly protection. It will excite them," Hearfield shouted. "You Kingsley, let Miss Potter alone. I'll see her out of here. Clark, you are an ass to take a beautiful white woman into such a hole as this. Miss Potter, my arm. I—" to the *eta*—"I am the consul. Warship-country. Get out of my way. Get away from me. Go!"

They pressed the closer.

Dazed, Kingsley glanced at Taka. The white man made no move to release the girl nor could he, for she held his hand that was about her firmly and tensely.

Hearfield bit his lip.

"We must have no excitement," he said loudly. Then, raising his voice higher: "Look at me! I am perfectly cool. I never was cooler in my life. Kingsley, you—you dirty beggar, this is your day. Kishibōjin festival. And I'll tell you, right now, that you were cut off without a cent by your uncle." Taka blinked at that. "You beggar—you thief—you drunkard—to touch a decent girl——"

"Go easy," Kingsley whispered. "Go easy!" To Blanche, "It is true, you know. But it hurts. You had better go ahead, Blanche."

For answer she pressed his hand the tighter and shook her head.

Clark nodded his head in violent approval. The women frowned at him.

"Blanche—my dear child—you don't understand! This is not the place for such explanations—" Mrs. Shearer was flustered, and showed it—"but Arthur—Mr. Kingsley—was called terrible things in the will—why, what will be said?—you are excited, Blanche. Arthur will come to no harm. Mr. Hearfield will see to that. And see to you, also, dear. Arthur just must pay the price, like all of us, if we were guilty. He has merited——"

She screamed.

A PIGMY of a woman, with a baby on her back, had fingered the bead-bag which Mrs. Shearer carried over her wrist. It *glistened*. It tempted the touch as it did the eye. The tiny woman meant nothing beyond satisfying her finger-tips that the shiny thing would be pleasant to feel. Not to have. Her imagination did not extend to possession. To touch. To caress for an instant, and to dream of after.

Mrs. Shearer screamed. Screamed, and jerked her arm. The catch of the purse caught against a thready tatter of the pigmy's kimono-sleeve; held an instant—gave—and opened. Round, minted Japanese gold fell out, glittered, and rolled beneath the feet of those near.

The *eta* went wild.

Here, in one of these gold pieces, was food unbelievable. Kishibōjin was caring for her own. The few sen they had asked Taka for—what were they as compared to one of these? Nothing! Here were twenty-yen pieces!

"Leave it alone!" Hearfield cried, his voice hushed to nothing in the shrieks of the crowd.

This way and that the coins rolled, and the *eta* swarmed after them. The foreigners were separated. The women squalled in fright. And Hearfield, patterning not after Taka's assumed air of calm and disinterest, but from the *eta*, went wild as well. He beat about him with his fists, unheeded until the last bit of gold had been caught up and hidden in kimono or mouth; heeded then, and far too well.

A knife flashed, and another—long, two-edged *geta*-menders' knives and short, pointed knives for the gutting of fish.

"Now we get it!" Taka grunted. "I wish I were back in the tea-house of the Pomegranate Petals. *Hail* Little man"—as a stone whizzed past him—"a better aim and I would be bowing before such of my ancestors as are in heaven."

He reached for his sword, had it half-way out as he went down with never a ripple to show where he had fallen.

Yet with all the lust for fighting where the odds were so overwhelmingly in their favor, cooler heads remembered that where one shiny bag contained gold, others would also. The women's clothes were pawed over in search of money.

Kingsley, with the first outcry, had pressed against a hut-wall, with Blanche

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close to him, and the *eta*, foreseeing that he meant escape, permitted him passage. But the white woman-*hai!* see the ring on her finger, and the jewel at her breast! Kingsley held her behind him and against the wall, protecting, striking wildly with his fists, wishful for an instant of respite that he might draw the knife from his belt, but never daring to spare the time. But, unlike Taka, he was head and shoulders out of the muddle of bodies about him, and apparently able to remain there. Where the officer had been unable to draw his sword, and had gone down trying, the white man was using his fists.

He kept a clear space about him, but a space that narrowed each time a blow missed. His breath became shorter. Hours of sleeplessness, days in the drinking-shops, the *guya-ya*, foodless mealtimes were telling—and quickly. He panted, his lips tightened, but the blows steadily lost force. A knife bared his arm from shoulder to elbow, and left a thin path of red to mark its visit. Brave souls on the outer edge pressed inward, and those nearest the white man were, willy-nilly, made brave by very circumstance.

And Clark?

This way and that he was buffeted. No arm was raised against him, for while a priest, as every one knows, will not fight, there are mighty and fearful curses he might call down upon them—with a stick of incense or two he could kill every one of them at some future time, and never turn a hair. He could bring reincarnation in the form of a snake or a toad or—worse—a cross of wood. Here and there he went as the crowd eddied about him.

He was unfrightened, but dazed dumb and actionless.

Once his finger-tips went together for comfort, and comfort the familiar gesture gave him. Sun flashed on knife. Why, the matter was growing serious. Was Taka coping with it satisfactorily? It did not seem so. He did not see Taka at all, but he did see Kingsley, with Blanche Potter behind him, pressed against a house—why, this was terrible. What ailed the people? And it was growing worse instead of better. He was responsible for Miss Potter as well as Kingsley was—hadn't he brought her here?

"This will never do!" he called, but no one heard him. "Stop, stop," he cried again.

Fascinated, he watched the movements of Kingsley's arms. "Why," he said aloud, "the boy is tiring. And they are after him with knives. I—indeed—I must do something!"

He knew his forehead was moist, and reached for a handkerchief. Possibly he was aware that it was the automatic he brought out, possibly not; at all events he raised it to his hot forehead. As he saw the knife rip Kingsley's sleeve, and the streak of red it left, his hand clenched.

The automatic cracked.

"I did not read the directions properly," Clark whispered. "I thought the safety-clasp was in the position where the gun would not discharge. I may have injured some one. I may have—it—it has gone off again!" he said in an awe-struck tone.

Those who had not heard the sound of the automatic's discharge the first time did hear the second. The *seiyo-jin* priest was crazed. Priests talk and curse and eat and drink and talk again, but they do not fight, and yet here was this round-bellied little priestling waving a gun in the air. Waving it? Shooting! Next he would shoot at them, as the soldiers had done at the time of the great rice-riot. First in the air. Then at the body.

A hiss of surprize. A mumbling, the sudden clatter of *geta* and *shuff-shuff* of straw sandals, and the Way of the Chaste River was empty, or nearly so. For while a fist bruises and a knife cuts, a gun kills.

Kingsley spoke first.

"After the battle, mother," he said, and the girl behind him laughed brokenly.

She did not laugh at what she saw, but from sheer nervous relief. Kingsley leaned back, and against the wall, his eyes shut, exhausted. The kimono moved where his knees and whole body trembled.

Mrs. Shearer was sitting on the ground, hat gone, disheveled, and praying vehemently. Her attitude was common to the other women, save Miss Anderson, who called loudly:

"Do not hit me again! You have all my money already—do not hit me again—" and pressed her arms about her head. She was dusty, but bore no evidence of anything save greedy fingers.

Hearfield was at full length, face downward; Taka had, bird-wise, his head under his kimono, and his arms about both. The officer brought one bright eye to bear.

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"Saved by the gods," he said evenly. "I was waiting for them to finish me. A great fellow had me by the neck, but was unable to do more than promise. I could not get my sword out, but bit him once or twice by way of identification in the leg. I think it was the leg. He will carry that mark when he goes to visit his great-grandparents. *Hai!* I will believe in your gods, Clark-san, or, regulations or not, I will carry one of those guns!"

"It went off——"

"It did. It did indeed," Taka agreed. "I wish that you had hit some one. This neck of mine aches, and I would feel better if some of these pigs had paid for it fully. But the bites I gave are something. Let us get out. The rats are holed, but may argue themselves brave again. Let us— Ho! Is Hearfield-san dead?"

He examined the consul.

"He bears no marks! He—" Hearfield opened his eyes—"where are you injured?" Taka asked solicitously.

"I am a mass of bruises." Stronger. "Something will come of this! Something will come of this!"

"Something indeed, if you do not get a hot bath and ease the bruises you speak of. We will go. There, Kingsley-san, you have done well. Does the arm hurt? Help him, Clark-san. The man is weak. Keep him in the mission-house until I can go into the details of this matter."

Kingsley staggered as he walked, and the missionary supported him on one side, Blanche Potter on the other.

"He is to be arrested!" Hearfield shouted, and jumped to his feet, proving that the bruises were light, if actually any existed. "The consulate will do nothing. I did not come to protest the arrest. Nothing. I tell you so officially. If Clark has told you Kingsley has wealthy relatives, I say they—he—is dead, and left ten dollars to this thief. Twenty yen only! And we will do nothing!"

"Do it, then," Taka whipped at him, and started off.

Hearfield glared about him, and read approval of anything he might do in the women's eyes.

"I will!" he stated loudly. "Kingsley, I am very tired of your actions about Hishiura. You are a thief. Let go of Miss Potter! That is what started all the trouble!"

Kingsley was held, not holding, and his head came erect with effort to meet the other's eyes.

"Let go, I say! I am tired of this interference! I am sick to death of it."

The consul grasped Miss Potter and began to pull her away, and, with the selfsame motion, slapped Kingsley across the face. There was little force to the blow, but the spent man staggered from it, and would have gone down had not Clark supported him.

Taka turned.

"Have you not had enough?" he inquired mildly. "Will you have the rats about you again? Or, if you must fight, why not wait until Kingsley-san is ready for it? He is sick, Hearfield-san. Fight if you must, and permit me to be a spectator, but not here, and not now."

Kingsley's face was bloodless, and he took a half-step forward. Clark held him firmly, the other tried to release himself weakly.

"Don't hold him!" Hearfield ordered. "Let the murderous, kniving, thieving devil go— I'll take care of him!"

He looked about for approval, and seemed to get it.

Clark cocked his head quizzically.

"Devil, you say? It appears, my dear Hearfield, as if the time has arrived for me to become devil's advocate. A strange calling for me, is it not?"

Very gently he slid Kingsley down to the ground, and stepped forward a pace.

"You said that you were tired from Mr. Kingsley's actions in Hishiura. I am tired of yours! I am. Yes, I am. You have thwarted me at every step! You have, I say! You want this poor boy jailed for some reason I do not know, but I can guess, and it displeases me. Why—why—Hearfield, I do believe that I hate you, even if it is forbidden to hate! You are a very mean and contemptible man. You—" he stopped, as Hearfield, examining the fat little missionary who was so destructive of consular dignity, decided that nothing was to be feared (with such witnesses to testify in his favor as the women) from this talker, slapped Clark's face as he had done Kingsley's before.

Clark grew grey as ash, and motioned for a moment with dry lips.

"Now the other cheek!" he said at last, and turned it toward him.

Hearfield slapped it, and Clark laughed suddenly.

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"There is nothing said of anything further," he shouted, and before Hearfield could raise his hands, was all over the consul at once.

Down into the thick, hot dust of the Way of the Chaste River they went, over and over. Hearfield's face was hot when it showed uppermost after the first onslaught, Clark's, glimpsed below, colorless white; very wan and thin at the lips, but his eyes seemed strangely old and wise, and—for the first time—gleamed with wickedness and fury, and still were strangely sad. The upper man, Hearfield, reached up a hand to strike the face below, and then slowly lost equilibrium—shook his head (like a water-clogged hound) with effort—slipped as the other's arms wound more tightly about him and a leg-lever moved Clark around—farther——

The hands which had seemed, before, so loose and flabby seemed to have gained horrible strength as they wound partially about Hearfield's trunk—Clark threw him off all of a motion, and the striking arm never descended. The little missionary sprang to his feet, his eyes very bright.

"Think twice before you strike a defenceless man!" he said in a queer voice. "And think more often before you refuse aid to those who are troubled!"

"I am a sinner too," Taka said, as he swore once or twice, as if to get the sound of that hollow, unearthly voice from his ears, "but after to-day I will sleep clean. I have seen something uncanny, and not readily to be believed. The lowly—*aeil* but I will be turning priest myself next, since I voice such sayings."

"Not that it isn't a profession, when it breeds such a fighter," he added in a more natural voice.

Taking Clark's arm, he extended the other to Kingsley, who already had risen and stood uncertainly with Blanche's about him: the four walked slowly toward the bridge-end of the village in that order. The rear was brought up by the women, hurried by the sight of peering *eta* from the doorways. The tourists were loud about the complaint they intended making Tokio about the whole matter, and especially of the unprovoked assault Mr. Clark had made upon Mr. Hearfield, who had tried so hard to protect them, and used such excellent judgment.

"I will have something to say of that in my report," Taka murmured to Clark, but the missionary, eyes still shining, did not hear him.

The consul was agreeable. They would, at least, say that he had done his duty? Good! And for his part he would settle the rest of the matter as soon as they were back in Hishiura. If Taka-san would not arrest Kingsley some one else would—he would see to it—yes, sir, he would see to it—and they would see that Miss Potter came to her senses—of course it was only sympathy for Kingsley——

Yes, they would all see to everything.

CROWDS were in the Hishiura streets, gay costumes sobered almost to drabness by the carmine and golden-yellow of the *geisha* on parade; the atmosphere was electric—as it had been in the *eta* village, but with happiness now, with gentle pleasure—a pomegranate showed fluted carmine blossoms against the glossy green of leaf. The day quickened, and from the balcony of the inn, facing a courtyard where soon a pool would show streaks of reflected starlight, and stone lanterns glistening with ghostly fire, Blanche Kingsley, her husband, and Clark saw and thrilled to the loveliness.

"Do not spoil it, Arthur," the girl said, when he whispered again of that which troubled him, that she had married a beggar. "Do not spoil it. For what does it matter?"

Little enough, Gilbert Clark decided. He patted the cablegram which was still in his pocket. They were married—he had married them himself—and he might tell them now. And so utterly confound those tabby-cats of women! Suppose that he told the truth?

That he had received a cable—not a first, hot-sent rumor affair, like that received by Hearfield, but from a firm of lawyers, one of whom had come from his home town, and to whose son he sent such stamps as the house-boy didn't discover and filch. Suppose he told them now—as possibly he should—that Blanche had been left the money—the amount, in its vastness, meant nothing to him beyond a sum—under proviso that she marry Arthur Kingsley, and so steady him. Suppose he did this? Suppose he had done it before?

Would all this have happened? Wouldn't Kingsley have crept away and back to his

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kennel again? Would the girl have been so free and brave? Would he have been able to post the money for Kingsley's release as from a relative—as he had done that afternoon, to Hearfield's anger and disgust?

Should he tell them now?

He patted his finger-tips together. It might complete their happiness. He looked up, and saw them in the shadow of the tilted eaves. Clark smiled.

"It is a wonderful thing that I had the pistol," he thought.

Waited a long interval.

"I do not believe that they would care to hear," he added to himself. "It is late. I had better return to my house, and see that the passports are viséd, and a new one issued for Arthur. How Hearfield will hate to do that! I—I almost wish that I had slapped his face after I threw him! Let me see—yes, the passports. Of course I am Blanche's guest, and Arthur's also, and the passports could wait."

The girl and man were still in the shadows.

"But I had really better go—and see if that rascally house-boy of mine——"

He did not know what the rascally boy might have done, or left undone, but softly tip-toed from the balcony and, still smiling and totally pleased with himself, walked through the crowded streets toward the mission-house. Men bowed to him, and addressed him as the Fighting Priest—the word was already about. Taka had not been silent.

"I have not done badly this day," Clark said aloud, and rubbed the muscles of his right arm with the other hand. "No, I have not done badly," he repeated happily as he strode along.

Despite himself, he swayed a bit as he walked, a tiny swagger not unlike the swinging of a carriage on tight springs.

ARROWS

by Frank H. Huston

EVERY plains teepee had hanging in it a bunch of slender sticks seasoning for arrows.

If particular in the materials for his bow the brave was even more so where arrow stock was concerned. Any available hardwood if straight and free from knots served. When seasoned the shaft was meticulously scraped and smoothed, feathered with various pinions, the Arapajos and Cheyenne usually using those of the wild turkey, softened in tepid water, split and glued with a glue made from a large muscle at the back of the neck of the buffalo.

This glue was less susceptible to climatic variations than any other used by the tribes. The final touch was given by placing an individual mark upon the shaft to identify the person who made the kill whether of human or brute game.

Heads were made from flint, obsidian, odd bits of iron and even old barrel hoops, until toward the last of the bow-and-arrow days, traders carried in iron ones made in Eastern and English manufacturing towns, shipped in barrels.

Those made in England were the favorites, but lacking all else the shoulder blades of animals were utilized.

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STANDISH of the STAR Y

A Five Part Story—Part IV

by GORDON YOUNG

Author of "On the Waterfront," "Oysthers," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form.

"STAY where you are. Situation here worse than ever. Really dangerous to come. Am writing you in detail—C. C. Renalds."

Norman Standish, back East after a trip abroad, perused his uncle's telegram and frowned. After his mother had died, leaving the Star Y ranch to his half-brother Bob and himself, he had decided to inquire how matters stood at Martinez. This was his answer. It took him two minutes to make up his mind. Arrived at Martinez he put up at the Davis's, as the one hotel had been called when Colonel Standish lived and Robert and Norman were boys. Quite inadvertently he learned from the bartender, Welch, that Renalds had acquired a black name in the town. Therefore Norman felt it would be best to conceal his identity a while longer and see what else he could discover.

In the barroom Norman listened as two "nesters" talked with Welch. His heart turned to ice as he heard that Robert had been found dead in the desert with a bullet-hole in his forehead. He also heard that Robert had been against Renalds' tactics at the Star Y and as a consequence nephew and uncle had had many quarrels.

"Who done it, you reckon?" asked the younger nester.

His tone implied that he had suspicions of his own.

"Who done it!" the bartender repeated contemptuously. "I allow that no man what's got half my sense, the which I ain't braggin' is overmuch, won't make no guesses out loud. Somebody seems to be doin' a ——'s plenty not more'n a hundred miles or so from here. But I ain't mentionin' of no names."

As he listened Norman heard that Renalds was waging a merciless warfare against the nesters who sought to make a living in his section. Renalds had gathered to the bosom of the Star Y a gang of hard-riding, reckless shooting cowboys who would stop at nothing.

That evening, Standish still having managed to conceal the fact that he was the sole owner of the Star Y, his uncle's ranch hands, headed by Harvey, the foreman, came in. They manifested much wary curiosity as to Standish's identity but he held them off until the appearance of Buck Blevins. Blevins, an untamed specimen, forced Standish into an argument. Just as the cowboy aimed a blow at the Easterner, Keyes, the telegraph operator shouted:

"Buck—Buck Blevins! Don't! That's Renalds' nephew."

When Blevins had drawn back, abashed, Harvey stepped forward and questioned Standish. Then, when Standish admitted that he was Colonel Standish's son, the ranch foreman made arrangements for him to go out to the Star Y on the following morning. He also announced that Renalds was absent from the ranch on business.

Later, in the barroom, Standish heard of the disappearance of Old Sawyer, an old-time Westerner, who had been Colonel Standish's friend as well as Bob's and no particular admirer of Renalds. There was much doubt as to whether Sawyer was still alive.

THE next morning Simmons, the cowboy dedicated to the job of seeing Standish safely out to the Star Y, appeared. Through a ruse Simmons and the blacksmith, "Blackie," pretended that the horse Standish was to ride was unbroken. Sensing the hoax, and his pride hurt, Standish forced the horse into a wild frenzy, and was thrown. He won the respect of the two men when he insisted on riding the horse to the Star Y, after the animal had again quieted.

AS THEY rode along and Simmons became more communicative, Standish learned something of the relationship between "Red" Allister and Black Renalds. It seemed that when Renalds had agreed to operate the Star Y for Standish's mother until

"Standish of the Star Y," copyright, 1923, by Gordon Young.

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Bob and himself were of age, Renalds had been forced to leave his own property, the 44 Circle. During his absence he had installed Allister as his foreman and, as Simmons pointed out, with his tongue in his cheek—there had been a notable decrease in the size of the Star Y stock, and a corresponding increase in the 44 Circle's since this arrangement.

What interested Standish more than anything, however, was the fact that "Fuzzy" Butler, the man generally thought to have been Bob Standish's murderer, was a tool of Allister's. Then too, as Simmons pointed out, Allister had been no friend of Bob Standish's.

On the way to the Star Y, Simmons and Standish stopped off for a while at Reddin's road-house. Here Standish found a black horse tethered and apparently the property of one "Buckaroo," a reckless individual, inside. While they were resting Standish inadvertently learned that the horse belonged to McCullough, a neighboring rancher. With the help of Simmons, Standish secured control of the horse, intending to return it.

At Reddin's he also met a consumptive youth named Barney. Barney had known Bob Standish and confided to Standish that Renalds with the aid of Allister was driving the nesters out of the territory by illegal means.

As they were leaving Reddin's, Standish and Simmons were fired upon by the disgruntled Buckaroo and his companion. After a short exchange of pistol shots the two rustlers were killed, but not before Barney was also fatally injured. Before they left, Standish heard from Reddin that Frazier, a nester, had been burned out by unknown men. Standish was indignant and Simmons tried to soothe him.

"Well," said Standish, "you can go on to the ranch if you like. I—I am going to Frazier's."

They found the Frazier family with no property left but a few provisions and a covered wagon, but stanch in their determination not to be driven out. The family consisted of Frazier, his wife, Wally their son, and a sweet-faced adopted daughter, Jess. "Maw" Frazier told Standish that his brother had been a friend of theirs, and then proceeded to enlighten him further as to the high-handed methods of Renalds and Allister. When Standish left he promised to send them relief.

ARRIVED at the Star Y, Standish was approached by a reckless youth named Bud Russell, who had been Bob Standish's best friend. He said that not only had Fuzzy Butler been responsible for the shooting of Bob Standish, but that Butler had also paid for his crime. He declined to discuss the particulars of the case for the present.

Trouble developed when Harvey, the Star Y foreman, refused to obey all of Standish's instructions. Harvey announced his opinion frankly.

"Young man, at first I took a likin' to you. But I haven't any now."

"I haven't any dislike of you at all, Mr. Harvey. But I am going to have my way in the management of this ranch. Do you still refuse to tell me who burned out Frazier's?"

"I do."

Finding he could do nothing with the foreman, Standish set the matter aside for the present and gave orders for Buck Blevins to be dispatched with relief to the Frazier household, as well as Mrs. Welch, in Martinez.

It was becoming evident every day that trouble was developing, not only with the nesters but the rustlers as well. A few days after Standish's arrival several bullets sped into Star Y territory.

THE events of the next couple of days occurred with bewildering rapidity. Standish witnessed a gun duel in the hills with a rustler who managed to escape; he received a wire from his uncle saying he was returning; an eastbound train ten miles out of Martinez was robbed of twenty thousand dollars in gold. But the biggest shock came when he learned that in an effort to rid the country of the nesters Red Allister, assisted by Star Y cowpunchers and neighboring ranchers, was going to stampede thousands of cattle over nester territory.

Riding on the outskirts of the Star Y corrals Standish found Bud Russell, driving Star Y cows before him, headed for the hills. Standish whipped out his pistol.

"Bud Russell," he shouted, "up with your hands!"

Russell, finding himself caught, grinned broadly and endeavored to stay his captor's wrath. When Standish accused him of stealing Star Y cattle he denied it.

"I ain't stealin'. Me an' another feller has just sorta gone in pardnership with you—same as Red Allister has!"

"Same as ——! What do you mean, Russell?" Standish shouted angrily.

Russell explained that it was a well-known fact that Black Renalds and Allister operated on a partnership basis, and that for every nester Allister drove from the country Renalds gave him ten Star Y cows—never cows from the 44 Circle, his own ranch. He also stated with conviction that if Standish cared to go down to Ameco Point he would find his own cows being branded with the Lazy A.

"Me an' the feller I'm workin' with, we don't change no brands," Russell went on; "we're jest findin' a new range for Star Y cows. An' I bet if you was to go over and have a talk with Allister that you'd help me drive off your own cows."

When he had permitted Russell to go on Standish spurred his horse to Ameco Point and found that conditions were as he had stated. He endeavored to make the men desist from the branding, and when he was attacked he killed one of them. Boiling with anger, he rode back to the ranch and found Harvey.

The foreman told Standish that he was acting according to Renalds' orders and that while he was foreman of the Star Y he would take orders from no one but Renalds. At the point of a pistol Standish demanded his resignation—and got it. Then, realizing that there was some good stuff in the foreman and that the blame actually rested with Renalds, Standish succeeded in winning the foreman over to his side. This done, both men set out to find Red Allister.

In a crowd of cowpunchers they found Allister. He regarded Standish with amusement. When Standish asked him what right he had to take over Star Y cattle for himself Allister insolently suggested that he take the matter up with Renalds. When Standish replied heatedly Allister's face drew into a threatening frown.

"I wouldn't take talk like that from any man but for your uncle being a friend of mine, an'——"

The sentence was never finished. Standish broke in with a tone of fury—

"You never showed any such consideration as

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that for my brother—you hired Fuzzy Butler to shoot him in the back!"

Allister's hand snapped to his pistol, but before he could draw Simmons and Harvey had him covered. Then, taking the bull by the horns, Harvey stepped forward, accused Allister of stealing Star Y cows and offered to shoot the matter out with him. And Red Allister, long feared as a two-gun man, quit cold—turned with his tail between his legs and fled.

Having convinced the Star Y cowpunchers by now that he alone would give them orders, Standish rode to McCullough to warn him that the stampede was about to take place, and that it was too late to do anything but flee.

At McCullough's ranch he found Bud Russell and Old Man Sawyer, who had been believed dead. Kate McCullough, Mac's granddaughter, informed him that she had been responsible for Russell's theft of the Star Y cattle and that she was trying to save them from Allister. She also said she had married his brother Bob Standish six months before.

As Standish made his way to McCullough he saw nesters on all side, women, children and men—and every one preparing to weather the stampede that would soon be upon them.

NORMAN did not pause to listen to Russell's story of where they had gone, or how, apparently to keep the marriage secret. He spurred his horse forward, nearly knocking over a woman who was carrying water from the corral pump to her stove, set up under a tree. Before the doorway of the house he jumped from the saddle, leaving the reins trailing, and stamped into the dim room.

Kate, leaning against a wall by the window, with the letter she had finished reading in her hand, had been gazing thoughtfully through the pane.

At his step she turned quickly, eyes blazing, and stared at him in a manner of impending wrath.

"Kate," he said quickly. "I've just got it out of Bud Russell that you and my brother were married. And I want to tell you now that you don't need to take Bob's share a few cows at a time. That was probably the only way you could get them while Renalds was in charge, but I'm running the ranch now, and half of it is yours. I'll see that you get it, every hair and hide of it—just the same as if Bob were alive!"

Her dark eyes changed focus, for an instant became blank; then a certain stiffness went out of her body and she looked at him with a kind of bewilderment. Her lips trembled from quivering smiles to the pressure of firm silence; it seemed that she was about to laugh nervously, and more nervously about to cry. The sheer unexpectedness of his coming and of what he said had struck her like a blow; and she stared at him as if seeing hidden mysteries come to light.

"But—but Norman, we weren't married—ever! Bud Russell doesn't know what he's talking about! I can't imagine what made him say that. And you—Norman—I—you make me want to cry!"

She came closer; her manner was amazingly changed, and the dark eyes glowed with a depth of fire, soft, radiant, intense. Then—

"Norman—tell me—honest—*did* you tell Red Allister that he hired Fuzzy Butler to shoot Bob?"

"Yes—I did."

"And then—then what?"

"Before Allister could get a gun out, Simmons had put one against his stomach."

"Bless Slim's ugly old heart! He didn't tell me *that*. But Harvey—*did* you pull a gun on Harvey? He is more dangerous than Allister—that is, face to face. Did you?"

"But he wasn't expecting me to."

"And fired him? Did you fire him?"

"As my uncle's foreman. Then I hired him again as my own."

"Ah!"

She was a little doubtful about that.

"But it was Harvey who really broke Allister's reputation. He went with me to where Allister was, and after I had said what I had to say, Harvey tried to make Allister draw—and Allister wouldn't. Harvey meant to kill him."

"Norman, you'll forgive me, won't you, for calling you Pet? But I didn't *know* you had it in you. Bud Russell has been singing your praise from the time you came, but I—I didn't know you felt that way about Bob. I'm awfully sorry, Norman. I am really!

"You are still an awfully pretty girl."

"As pretty as Jess Frazier?" she asked quickly, wickedly teasing.

He saw the same half-impish glow on her face as when she was a child and had tormented him.

"Jess Frazier is pretty," said Norman, uncomfortably. "But I—I don't care anything about her. Except, of course—you know—poor little thing. She *has* a refined

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face—and the manners and speech of a—a——"

"Nester's daughter. Yes, I know just what you mean. And O Lord, how I hate these nesters! And you—and you, Norman Standish, what do you mean by standing up for them, letting them take your range!"

"Didn't Bob?"

"And didn't I haul him over the coals for it! I think he stood up for the Fraziers more to spite your uncle than anything else. Dad or Bob didn't like Mr. Renalds, but I did—I still do!"

"But Kate, he is trying to drive you out, to ruin everything here!"

"Of course he is, and do you think I blame him? No! If I owned cattle I wouldn't let a squatter—oh what's the use? Bob and I quarreled more over nesters than everything else put together. My, but you have grown good-looking!"

"You mean in the last few minutes?"

"No! Don't be impertinent! You used to be awfully skinny and long-legged as a boy. How I loved to make you miserable! Did I? I never could really tell. You wouldn't give me even that satisfaction."

"You have at times, yes. One of them was about a half-hour ago."

"Don't blame me for that, Norman. I didn't know how you felt about Bob. We all thought that Mr. Renalds was simply robbing the Star Y and building up the 44 Circle so you would get everything."

"And still you liked him?"

"Of course I like him. Why shouldn't I? He likes *me!*"

"My uncle likes *you?*"

"Oh don't be silly. He came over here to see dad one time, about a year ago. Dad wasn't here. Mr. Renalds offered to buy us out. I told him we wouldn't sell. I told him to be riding. He wasn't very pleasant, but he didn't get angry. He said—

" 'Kate, if you will marry Bob and make him attend to business, I'll let him have a herd on percentage.'

"Wasn't that nice of him? But I knew that dad would never let me accept a thing from Mr. Renalds, and besides, I had just had a quarrel with Bob, so I said I wouldn't marry him for a thousand cows! And I meant it—then.

"Mr. Renalds was really awfully nice in that queer, cold way of his. He said he wouldn't mind at all dad's being here in Ameco Bend as a nester, but it was encouraging other nesters, and that as a cattleman, with thousands of heads to feed, he simply could not permit it; that he would have to drive them out, or be driven out himself.

"And you want to know what I said? I said—

" 'Mr. Renalds, if I were a cowman I'd shoot every nester the minute he stepped on the range!'

" 'Kate,' he said, 'I do wish you would marry Bob.'

" 'No,' I told him. 'Bob likes nesters too well.'

"I shook hands with him when he left. But dad was furious when I told him. I don't think that Mr. Renalds knows this stampede is being planned on McCullough's. I think it is Red Allister!"

"I am afraid they both know it, Kate. Everybody says my uncle is a fine cattleman, but in his hands the Star Y has certainly dwindled—and the 44 grown."

"I know," she answered quietly. "Dad says the same. And Bob, of course. I have told Bob time and again to go have a straight man-to-man talk with Mr. Renalds, and Bob would go, but he always said something the first thing that would make Mr. Renalds angry. I have told Bob time and again that to me the wonder was that Mr. Renalds has treated him so well! Then *we* would have a quarrel," she said merrily.

"Kate, please tell me about those Star Y cows in the cañon. I don't care—but I have to know. I am running the ranch now, and old Sawyer shot a lot of fine horses."

"You wait till I get hold of Bud Russell—saying I was married! But I can't tell you, Norman. I wish I could—but——"

She thrust her hand deeply into her pocket. There was the faint sound of crackling paper.

"But I can't. I'd like to."

"Who was it killed Fuzzy Butler—do you know?"

Fiercely—

"I do!"

"Who was it?"

She shook her head.

"Was it *you?*"

"My Heavens, no! What do you think I am, Norman? I'm a woman. I hate women, but I am one—that's why I can't hurt anybody; and oh there are lots and lots of people I'd like to choke. Butler was

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one—and Red Allister. I think I could kill *him!*"

"Who did it, Kate?"

Again she shook her head.

"Don't ask me about that. He knew that Bob used to ride over here to see me—he was caught near here. It was right here in this room—in that chair—that he confessed. Oh I'll never go through such a thing again—and what followed. I sat here after they were gone and shivered and cried and prayed. It was terrible! But he had shot at Bob time and again—once somebody shot right through the window while Bob was at the table. I nearly died. Ooh-oh!"

Norman had not thought that she could show such quivering emotion. He had thought of her as a tempestuous, nearly heartless, iron sort of girl; but now she shuddered again and again, as if with chills. Then she dropped into a chair, but not the one in which Butler had sat under menacing and merciless questions that tore a confession shred by shred out of him.

"Kate, listen, you mustn't stay here tonight. None of the women must stay. The men shouldn't either. That stampede—and Allister is determined to ruin everything. Oh I know that Mac never ran from anybody, or you either. But go now—please! A thundering herd is going to be driven down on you—nothing under heaven can stop them!"

She was up in an instant, eyes flashing, head up imperiously.

"Oh yes we can stop them! There's going to be more dead cattle around here than if a blizzard had hit! Why, I wouldn't go! I'd rather be rode down and tramped on than run! It's getting dark. I wonder if dad has come—and those farmers. I'll have to ride down there an' see what they are doing——"

"What are they doing with all that hay and brush?"

"We're going to fire it, right in face of the cattle. They won't go through fire!"

"Who thought of that?"

"Dad, of course. Come on. You ride with me. I'll tell you all about it."

She stopped quickly, seizing his arms, looking at him.

"Norman—I—I—you are wonderful!"

She continued to look at him for a few moments with strange intentness; then she smiled slightly in a slow queer way, took her hands from him and hurried out.

Norman followed, puzzled, trying to think. He did not understand her; he was a little bewildered and not pleased. She did not seem to remember his brother with quite the tenderness that was due.

XXVII

IT WAS night when they returned from the fence where the nesters were working hard with brush and hay, trying to lay fuel for a mile long fire-line that would turn the herd.

Norman had suggested starting the fire just after sun-down, in the belief that it would surely stampede the cattle—in the opposite direction. But Kate explained that her father was going to try to stampede them with horsemen first, then light the fire.

Simmons and Russell had ridden with them, and as these two fellows were not very friendly after their gun-play, Russell had kept beside Norman.

"What did you mean, Russell, by telling me Kate and Bob were married?"

"Well, Mr. Standish, Bob al'us insisted as how they really was. Kate, she allowed as how they wasn't—but a man oughta know. It was this away. Bob an' Kate went over to Hurino. It's a little 'dobe town about thirty mile 'round on the other side of Ameco. There was a priest there, but he wasn't there then; which was shore hard luck, for Kate she had made up her mind as how she was willing to git hitched.

"They was comin' back an' saw some campers down in a 'rroyo off the road. They stopped an' said 'howdy,' an' saw right off that them campers didn't know shucks about nothin.' Kate an' Bob got off an' give 'em some pointers, told 'em where to find water, an' how to git to a road.

"A tall old feller with a white beard two feet long allowed as how he was a parson, leadin' his family to the Promised Land.

" 'If you are a parson,' says Bob, 'then you can marry us, can't you?

" 'I shore can,' says the old man.

"So Bob an' Kate they had their usual fuss 'fore she would agree to do anything he wanted; but she give in—she always gives in. You've seen a hoss staked out to git rope-wise? The hoss goes lickety split an' when he gits to the end of the rope he turns a couple o' somersaults an' comes down on his back. Then he gits up, looks

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around, shakes hisself, an' tries it ag'in. Kate, she's like that with Bob. She wouldn't break away for nothin,' but she's al'us curious to see if Bob's still got a good holt on the rope.

"So she give in an' they was married.

"Then they started for home. But Kate she got to allowin' that maybe that old feller weren't no parson, in spite o' his long whiskers all so nice an' white; an' she wouldn't have it that they was married. She still won't have it, though Bob he al'us thought that old feller's whiskers an' voice oughta been enough. So that's the way it is."

"But I thought you said she always gave in?"

"She does. Only Bob this time he weakens, an' he says as how he ain't goin' make any woman be his wife if she don't wanta be. Then o' course Kate she says she wouldn't marry any man that felt that way about her, an' though maybe that fellow *was* a parson, Bob has to want her a whole lot more than he evidently does afore she'll have *him*. You know as much about it now as anybody."

WHEN they returned to the house many cooking-fires were alight under the trees, and these cast flickering gleams over the scene, where women bustled, three or four families to a fire, frying potatoes, bacon, steaks, opening cans of vegetables, sharing among one another, pawing about in their piles of goods for pans and pots—all with a kind of nervous haste. The women chattered shrilly, nervously, scolding without anger the children that ran about, tugging at skirts, getting in the way, wanting supper.

Nesters had come from afar. They had come, not because they were afraid of the cattle but for fear of the cattle war. They knew that they were to make their stand at McCullough's. Rumors of the plan to overrun the place with a stampede had been abroad on the range for weeks. If the nesters won this fight there might be other fights before they would be allowed to live in peace; but if they lost it, nothing would remain but to get out of the country. And most of them had come with all they could carry on their wagons. They feared that far and wide riders would scatter and burn their houses and goods.

Yet there was no panic, none of the apathy and sobbing of refugees. They were for the most part illiterate, lean, weary, but tough as the mesquite that fastened itself to the hard land which they tried to clear. They were used to being on the move, to camping in the shade of their wagons, to making a home for a night, or a week or a month, for a few years, wherever they found water. Nearly all had sharp features but dull expressions; and they were without fear, and were full of obstinacy.

Many of them had been born in covered wagons; practically all were born of granger-pioneers who had been pushing ploughs on the trail of retreating Indians, and sullenly fencing in cattlemen's waterholes.

NORMAN found that "them there Jacksons" had come in. The Fraziers were with them.

Mrs. Jackson, who was rather fat, explained breathlessly, with the help of rapidly running comment from the tireless Maw Frazier, that they had intended all along to come in, but she weren't goin' to leave her half-growed turkeys runnin' loose; an' she had just set right there on the wagon counting them till the men folks had scoured the fields and brush and arroyos.

Why, she had had them turkey eggs sent clear out from her people in Kansas; she had hatched 'em under settin' hens, an' fed 'em an' doctored 'em and guarded 'em from coyotes, till they was like children; an' she knew them cowboys would just have et 'em! No sir! No cowboy was goin' to eat a turkey of her'n—not if she had had to stay there all by herself an' shoo off the stampede with her apron!

Norman found McCullough off to one side, within a few feet of a little fire that Jess Frazier was starting for the Jacksons' and Fraziers' supper.

McCullough was talking with old Sawyer.

Norman passed her without speaking. He had not seen her; and she was then sorry that she had shyly pretended not to notice him.

McCullough was a rather small man, somewhat stooped when on foot, but in a saddle he appeared erect. His face was dry as a gourd, lined, not wrinkled, and dark as sun and wind would make a white man's face in fifty years and more of outdoor life.

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He wore flat-heeled cowhide boots, for these days he was much afoot, and carried a .45 because these were times when a gun might be needed, but usually he went about unarmed, for however stirring the range life might now seem to younger men it had become tame compared with what he had known when outlaws were thick and Indians on the war-path.

He had gray eyebrows and deep gray eyes that appeared to have withdrawn farther and farther under his forehead to escape the sun and wind, until now they peeped from tiny slits far back in their sockets. He was one man old Sawyer, himself a lonely figure of the old West, regarded as sufficiently an equal to talk with.

And now they spoke slowly, with few words and much understanding.

As Norman came up both eyed him in silence.

"Mr. McCullough, you remember me I know. I'm Norman Standish. I am just as much against this cattle war as Bob would be. I rode over here before to see you, some days ago, but I was turned back by nesters who were keeping watch. You were gone. I came in this afternoon with Simmons of the Star Y. I didn't think you had a chance to beat that stampede, but now I do—and I'm ready to take orders from you just the same as anybody else."

McCullough answered in a dry, even, low tone:

"Then you an' your man have your horses ready. We goin' start pretty soon."

Norman saw that they did not have anything more to say. He felt that they were not quite sure of him. This made him feel foolish and a little angry. He turned away.

"Howdy Mr. Standish—er you here! Well, who'd 'a' thought to see you here!"

Jess looked up at him with the firelight on her face. She *was* pretty. Her hair, caught back and tied with a calico string, hung loose over her shoulders; and her dress in the fire-glow did not show its dirt and spots. Her feet were bare. But her voice was much like the voice of Maw Frazier.

"We been over 'to the Jacksons'. Maw she says them Jacksons er friends. She knowed Missus Jackson as a girl back in Kansas. She said if them Jacksons wanted a stay an' be tromped to death as how we'd stay an' be tromped with 'em. Them men you sent over from the hay ranch are a-lookin' a'ter our place. Paw he said all us nesters should come up here an' help fight if they was to be er fight. Me an' Wally an' Pete Jackson was a-chasin' turkeys all day 'most. An' Missus Jackson said if we overhet 'em they'd die. I'm shore glad we got in here—it's goin' be turrible tonight, I bet."

Men were now coming in from the field to eat, others remained on watch with orders to start the fire if the cattle began to move.

Those who had come in talked with slow short sentences, some bunching together, others squatting or standing about, without enthusiasm and without fear. Hard, lean, tired men with sullen, steady eyes. They were like a race apart from any people Norman had known. They looked different, talked differently, moved and sat with a weary dullness that was different; yet they were firm, dangerous men.

Kate had told him that they were going to gather what riders they could—very few of the nesters would do for this daring bit of work—and try to stampede the cattle, heading the herd eastward.

"The cowmen may not be expecting anything like that," she told him, "and if they are, there will be a fight and the cattle will grow frightened and maybe break away anyhow. We," she said fiercely, "can stampede them just as many times as you cowmen can bunch them and drive them this way!"

Norman, Simmons and Bud Russell had supper together, each sitting on his foot, cowpuncher fashion, eating from a plate about Jess Frazier's fire.

Maw Frazier seemed more scrawny, untidy, vitriolic and generous than ever. She thought Wally was fine enough to be President, but scolded him unmercifully. Norman felt that she simply liked to talk, and that scolding was the easiest way for her to keep going. She now talked at a rattling gait, and swore a little when she overturned the coffee pot on the coals; then blamed Paw Frazier.

"You orta been watchin' it!"

He sat hunched over, legs straight out, his plate on the ground between them. He looked up at her in a mild way, said nothing, looked down, and went on eating, chewing large mouthfuls slowly, as if eating was work that required steady attention.

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Wally had gobbled a steak and biscuits and hurried off eagerly with his rifle to help stand guard.

Bud Russell grinned and teased Maw, drank three cups of the fresh coffee, black as liquid midnight, and praised it as the best he ever had.

All about them in the red glow of the small fires was the nomadic bustle of a hasty camp. The forms of women hurried about the fires; there was sizzling of grease, the flap of dough; the shrill shout of a child calling another; the clatter of pans, odor of burning wood, the smell of horses that pawed and trampled uneasily. Men talked with a low nasal drawl, finished their food, brought out pipes, picked coals with bare fingers from the fire, puffed, stood up, walked away.

From afar, again and again, came the long, thunderous bellow of troubled cattle.

XXVIII

NORMAN and Simmons were sitting on the top of the corral, with a lantern on the ground some feet away, their saddled horses nearby, when they heard the shrill hoot of an owl, repeated three times. It rang clear, loud, steadily.

"Danged funny," said Simmons, tossing away his cigaret and listening. "I ain't heard that cry since——"

He stopped shortly, looking strangely toward Norman.

The cooking fires were out, excepting one under a large tree where the women had gathered, sitting, squatting, talking and drinking coffee, now and then throwing on pieces of wood.

"What is it, Slim?"

"Danged funny," Simmons repeated, though the owl remained silent. "I knowed a feller onct that could cry that-a-way almost better'n an' owl itself."

"Who was it?"

Simmons did not answer.

Bud Russell came with stumbling haste out of the shadows. He paused to pick up the lantern and hook its handle over the jutting butt of a post in the corral. They could see that his face was excited. He had a white cloth rolled up under his arm.

"What's the matter, Russell?" Norman inquired.

"'Lo! You fellers hear that owl——"

A horse rushed past with clattering throb of hoofs. Norman caught a blurred glimpse of the rider, leaning forward, reins high, quirt up and falling. It was Kate.

"There she goes!" shouted Russell. "She been waitin' for the owl since dark. You fellers are ridin' with Mac—I'm gone!"

With that he dodged into the shadows, and a moment later they heard his horse racing after the faint *clickety-clackety* gallop of Kate's horse.

"I shore don't understand this hootin' at all," said Simmons gravely. "I almost 'd think——"

Then he began to roll a cigaret.

Before it was lighted McCullough came up on foot. He also had something white under his arm, rolled up.

"All right," said McCullough. "You boys get on your horses. I'll be right with you. There's some other fellers goin' with us. Here——"

He pulled out one of the rolls of white cloth under his arm and handed it to Norman.

"Tear it in two," said McCullough. "It's a sheet—but keep it out o' sight till you hear me give the word."

Norman took the sheet, got to the ground, shook it open.

Instantly the horses tied to the corral, and those near by, began jerking, jumping, snorting.

"Whoa, you danged fools!" said Simmons. "An' son, you want to be careful how you go wavin' white objects around hosses at night. They believe in ghosts, hosses do. An' I'm almost believin' in 'em myself."

He turned his head to one side for a moment, listening.

"What's the matter, Slim?"

"Nothin'—I guess."

But in the lantern light he gave Norman a peculiar, doubtful look.

"What's the matter with you?"

"I reckon I'm gittin' skittish in my ol' days."

They split the sheet and Norman did not know quite how to manage to keep it out of sight until he saw Simmons stuffing his piece into the front of his shirt.

They now heard the sound of voices, the tramp of horses, and McCullough reappeared, on horseback, followed by five or six men, good riders, chosen from the nesters who like himself had been cowpunchers at one time or another.

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"There's another party goin' ride down on the herd from the north," said McCullough. "We all will go along the south fence."

It was along the east fence that the hay and brush had been scattered.

"All we are after is to scare that herd—an' as soon as we get 'em goin' good, we stop. The night guards out there'll shoot, an' if anybody here feels like it, he can shoot back. But now all you boys remember, we ain't out there to kill folks, we are goin' out to scare cows. An' if they do get that herd started in on us, we don't want no dead heroes. Ever'body just turn tail an' run. But come in wide of the fences, 'cause the men down there at the east fence are goin' be shootin' jest to see how many cows they can kill. Old Sawyer's down there, an' I don't guess anybody here'd want him to mistake you for a cowboy, though I reckon for a while there'll be plenty o' light to see by. Now's there any questions?"

A man coughed, a horse whinnied. Somebody swore softly at nothing in particular. There were no questions.

"Let's be ridin'," said McCullough.

With jingling rattle of spurs and creak of leather, and the soft thud of trotting horses, nervously alert, they rode out from the shadows of trees and buildings to the open ground.

The night was starlit. Behind them the great ridge of mountains seemed floating motionless. Before them lay the prairie, darkly dotted with the shadows of sage.

They knew that they would not be able to get much closer than within a half-mile of the herd, if as close, without being seen; but they counted on making a charge against the thin line of night herders, at the same time the fires were lighted, and frightening the cattle.

They passed the east fence.

Low shouts from the small army of men waiting there urged them to "scare them cows plumb to ——!"

From a distance they presently heard the faintly high-pitched voice of a cowboy as he rode before the herd, singing. Then they caught sight of a great spreading blot, like a lake of dark water. This was the cattle.

"We'll ride on at a trot till we're hailed," said McCullough. "Then spread out an' go for 'em!"

They rode on.

Then, suddenly from a great distance, they heard the cry—

"Who in —— are you?"

"That wasn't meant for us!" said McCullough. "They've hailed the other party. But spread out an'——"

Then there broke a shrill yell off to the left of them—yell on yell, the piercing *yi-i-ee* of the cowboy, as loud and blood-curdling as a war-whoop.

"I know that yell! That *is* him!" cried Simmons, and spurred away, answering with *yi-ee-i-oh!*

Through the starry dimness as he strained his eyes toward the south, Norman seemed to catch a flickering gleam of white; and the next instant, tugging at the cloth in his shirt with which to help frighten the cattle he and all the men about him were yelling, and they rode headlong. Yells seemed to go up from every side, near and far. Dagger-pointed fire gleamed and vanished here and there before him, and the report of guns reached him faintly afterwards.

Norman's horse, running like a thunderbolt, gathered the speed of terror as the white cloth began to stream out above him. He covered the ground with powerful headlong leaps, frantic, crazy.

Amid all this Norman actually heard the frightened snorting of the mass of cattle as they came to their feet; he heard the clattering tramp of their feet as they stamped wildly, bunched together, pushing and jumping. It was like an army of tuneless drums, beating wildly. On all sides rose more yells and shooting.

The cowmen had not been caught off guard. Learning that all the nesters were gathered at McCullough's, they had expected some such attempt would be made. And some three hundred cowboys, hastily gorging supper, had changed mounts and gone on guard, standing in groups to the east of the cattle, waiting for the stampede signal; and they were ready to start instantly. The night herders, on watch at the west half of the circle of cattle, and there more to detect any approach of the nesters than to keep the cattle quiet, simply rode furiously, doubling back and joined the storm of horsemen on the other side that swept down on the herd with yells, shots and waving slickers, pounding the cattle toward McCullough's. The terrified cattle lunged confusedly first one way

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and then another, leaped on one another's backs, piled up, pressed out, and broke in the direction where there were the fewest horsemen.

The nesters at the east fence had waited too long before getting their line of fire into a blaze; and the cattle were started for them.

Almost before Norman was aware of it, the cattle were charging down on him. He swerved, riding across their front, yelling madly. The half-sheet was thrown fluttering from his hand. He drew his gun and shot, bringing a steer leader to its knees. The leading cattle turned slightly, spread out, and came on, driven by the frantic mass behind them. It was like a flood rolling out over a crumbling dam.

Norman turned back and forth across the front of the charging cattle, passing other horsemen doing the same. He heard Simmons's high, drawling curses—then the voice, and mere leaping shadow of horse and man had passed. Norman simply forgot to run for it, as McCullough had instructed. It was not bravery that held him so much as sheer excitement.

The charge of the cattle shook the earth. He felt it vibrantly, even in his saddle. Their snorting and bellowing and rattling of tossed horns mingled with the yelling of the horsemen on their flanks. The explosive ring of .45's was like an army firing with revolvers. In the starlight he caught the mad whiteness of the cattle's eyes, the gleam of horns, like long curved daggers. It was their eyes more than anything else that struck closest to what fear he had in him, which in that frantic excitement was not much.

A rider that he knew was Kate by the merest trace of a glimpse rode past him. A white cloth fluttered like a streamer in her upraised hand. He swerved in a wide circle to follow, but when he had come around she was out of sight, cloth and all. She had thrown it away, and the oncoming cattle, pressed hard behind, were over it before they could shy and pass to either side of the strange white thing. They were full of terror. Nothing could stop them.

At every jump, Norman was riding at an angle that gave way before the cattle and coming nearer and nearer to the east fence. He turned his horse once more to ride across the charging front; then it seemed that a lurid dawn was breaking. A line of fire came up from the earth, throwing its glare upward and across the country until Norman could see the very holes of the cattle's nostrils as they bore down on him while he raced at a retreating slant across their front. The nesters had at last fired the brush and hay spread clear across the width of the field.

But nothing could stop the cattle, nothing but the mountains floating motionlessly, walling the country; nothing but those mountains and their own exhaustion. But the fire might turn them, that and shots of the rifles together.

A man on a pure black overtook Norman, slowed down an instant to the tired gallop of Norman's horse and shouted powerfully:

"Ride for it! We can't stop 'em."

Then he pounded on, with Norman after him.

"The rustler!" Norman cried aloud, uncertainly.

But he felt that he recognized the pure black—Inkdrop—and something familiar in the back of the rider identified him with the one he had seen and followed in the dawn at Turges Cañon.

Norman raced after him, trying to keep up.

Already the cattle had begun to split, veering off toward the right and left from the long line of fire; but they were not pausing—simply swerving slightly, one mass bending to the north, the other to the south; and the center, with the pressure of thousands of cattle behind it, driven frantic by the yelling of cowboys, the crack of guns, came on farther and farther, following the course of least resistance before the terror of the fire could make them plunge wildly into the deflected columns.

If the fire burned down before the herd had passed, or if the mass behind the center maintained its pressure, the cattle by sheer weight of mass might yet sweep down on the ranch, across the fields, through the home grounds, smashing and crashing and trampling, bursting through fences, corrals, buildings, and on across the country until exhaustion stopped them.

All along the outer flanks of the split columns hundreds of cowboys rode furiously, shooting, yelling, striking the cattle across the face with quirts and slickers, trying to close up the columns, mass them headlong, and by that sheer weight of outer

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pressure on those within send the cattle across the fire line, which in half a minute they could trample to dust.

So it was that the cattle on the outer flanks pressed inward, edging the columns over, increasing its inward curve before the desperate animals inside forced it out again so they could pass wide of the blazing piles of sage and mesquite at each end of the fence. And if any part of that long line of fire burned out, grew dark, the cattle would make for it as soldiers go for a breach in a wall.

The men strung out behind the fire were shooting; and Norman's opinion of nesters turned unfavorable at the piercing whang of bullets about his ears. With nearly a hundred men blazing away he remembered clearly what McCullough had said about dead heroes.

Now it began to seem to Norman that distance and time had somehow crazily changed. His horse seemed galloping with long bounds that hung in air and covered no ground; and the hurtling rush of the cattle, themselves almost as fast as horses, was insanely like a nightmare where objects are furiously in motion but seem hardly moving. The horseman in front of him, riding low and desperately, appeared to be little more than bounding up and down.

Such, under the strain, was the intense clearness of thought and sight that impressions registered in vivid instants as, more normally, they would have registered only in seconds or half-minutes. Like a graflex camera, he was catching movement in the thousandth part of a second.

Then, in front of him, the black horse went down. The rider was thrown clear. He lay quiet for a moment, then raised up on an arm, a second later leaped to his feet, and ran to the horse that was struggling to rise on a broken foreleg.

This horseman and Norman had been caught in the V-like pocket of columns of cattle, and the cattle were thundering by not a hundred feet from where the horse had fallen, and edging over closer and closer as they ran by.

Norman lay back, jerking at the reins with one hand, fumbling for his revolver with the other. The horse simply would not stop, but jumped and reared, breathing like a bellows, trembling, frightened. As Norman shot at the nearest steer, which had broken out from the stream of cattle, there was a second shot. The man had paused in the midst of his danger to kill the crippled horse; then, standing up, fired into the herd, selling his life at a high price.

Norman brought his fretting, bounding horse nearer and yelled:

"Here—up behind me! Here!"

The man glanced backwards, turned on the run, thrusting home his gun as he came. He leaped at the horse, caught the horn with one hand, the cantle with the other, was swung from his feet and held on, scrambling at the side of the terrified horse. Norman threw away his gun as the quickest way to get it out of his hand, and bending over, took hold under the man's shoulder, at the same time trying to rein the horse down.

"Let him go—let him *go!*" cried the man, who knew that it would be easier to mount when the horse was bounding rhythmically than with this uncertain jumping and whirling.

"Take the stirrup!" Norman shouted as the horse leaped ahead.

The man struggled gropingly with his foot, got a toe into the wide stirrup, and swung up behind, putting his arms around Norman's waist as Norman's foot now reached for the dangling stirrup.

"Who the —— are you?" the man shouted in a grateful voice.

"Standish of the Star Y!"

For a moment Norman thought they were both toppling from the horse: the man gave a sudden hard pull, and Norman seized the horn.

"I'll be ——!" cried the man, then laughed.

And the next they were caught by the cattle, surrounded, pushed on, unable to get out or turn.

They plunged on with the stampede, caught like a log when the jam breaks—two men on a tired and nearly wind-broken horse.

From time to time Norman heard a shot behind him. The man was downing a cow now and then to ease the pressure against the horse from behind. And the pressure on all sides grew tighter as they were carried along nearer to the great pile of burning brush, from which the cattle nearest wildly veered.

Norman could feel the weight of bodies against his legs, against his stirrups. Once a swinging horn even caught the bridle-reins,

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slackened to give the horse his head; but the cattle were mostly carrying their heads high; their bodies were jammed tightly together. All about they were leaping with forefeet on to backs, trying frantically to scramble across their slow-moving fellows. The light from the fire was intense, lurid. Again and again Norman lashed his quirt into the face of cows that reared up beside him. Horns rattled together, dust came up like a dry fog, the angry, frightened breathing was like the rush of wind through a leafless forest, the bellowing like thunder.

"Think we'll get out?" Norman shouted.

"Why not? We're all right—if the horse doesn't get hooked in the belly. An' if he does—you make a jump for the nearest cow. They are too scared to pitch. I knew a fellow that once rode out of a stampede on a cow's back."

Then the man laughed and a moment later shot again.

The cattle swept along, and they with them; but now the herd was beginning to move faster, for the part of it that they were with had passed the fire; and after they passed the fire the cattle began to break away from the cowboys on the outer flanks, for as the herd extended the cowboys were stretched out more thinly, and they in turn had to give way.

So the cattle spread toward the open country; and being cattle, raced along the McCullough fence, tearing their hides at times on the barbed wire, but without breaking through. If a fence ten times as strong had stood directly in their way they would have gone through it as through brush; but since it lay in the same direction as they were going, they followed it as water follows a bank, though they would have broken through but for the fact that on the outer flank of the column the cattle could spread out after they had passed the fire.

"Keep near the fence," shouted the man. "We'll be past it—then try to turn—but don't turn sharp—we'll be knocked over!"

It was very well to say, "keep near the fence."

Norman simply let the horse go. They were now galloping at full speed, running with the cattle. As far as they could see before and behind them there was the bobbing shadow-like movement of mad cattle, though over to the left of them there was McCullough's fields, still untouched by a cow's hoof.

The man continually reloaded, never emptying his gun, but after each shot or two, holding the gun before Norman with one hand, reaching around with the other to ram out shells, fumbling to poke fresh ones into chambers.

They swept along. Then passed the last of McCullough's fence.

"Edge over!" yelled the man, and he shot.

A galloping steer went down, giving the horse a little space in which to edge over.

"Now, again!"

Again the shot, and again a cow, badly hit, slackened, stumbled, fell, and the horse crowded over without being rushed against.

"Again!"

Norman shouted back—

"You're a good shot!"

"I know it!"

And he fired again.

So it was they worked their way out on the flank and in behind the shelter of McCullough's homestead, strongly fenced on all sides; and now standing like an island in the midst of a torrent. And getting in behind the west fence it was as if they had got in the lee of an island, for the storming cattle went on, trampling, pounding, like a flood of hoofs. In the uncertain starlight the ground seemed covered, as far as the eye could carry, with billowing shapes as if indeed it were a flood. The earth shook, and where the cattle had passed the ground was cut to dust, ankle deep.

XXIX

THEY rode close to the west fence. The man swung off from behind Norman and hesitated as if about to say something. But he climbed the fence and kicked out the staples in two posts, then he held down the wire with his feet, and Norman rode across. They were now safe. Stampeding cattle keep right on going straight ahead.

"We'd better fasten this wire back as best we can," said the man. "Mac's horses'll be getting out."

Norman dismounted and helped. They cut up the rope that hung at the saddle-horn and tied the wire tightly again to the posts.

Then the man said—

"Come here, I want to show you something."

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He struck a match and held it in his cupped hands between their faces, and he was smiling.

In the flickering match-glow Norman could see that it was a hard, brown, strong face, straight of nose, high of forehead, square of chin, with a sensitive smiling mouth; a handsome face, not unlike the miniature portrait of a young cavalry officer that hung in the home ranch-house; but there was less sternness in these living features, more of the cowboy's good-natured recklessness.

The man stared expectantly, asking—

"Know me?"

"You—you—it can't be *you!*"

The match dropped. The next instant Norman was seized by the shoulders, shaken with boisterous affection; then groping fingers reached for his hand and powerfully crushed his knuckles.

Bob Standish swore at Norman admiringly, pounded his back, punched his chest, shook him, hugged him, thrust him away, jerked him back.

"Why —— your onery hide—I was lookin' for a half-baked sissy with specs on! You're a man, kid. As good as they come! —— your good-for-nothin' soul, but I'm glad to see you! I nearly fell off that hoss back there when you said 'Standish of the Star Y'—an' to-night while we was riding down on the herd, Kate told me all about you. I came near telling you a half-dozen times, but I was afraid we'd both fall off that hoss if we got excited!"

"But Bob—Bob what—what about Fuzzy Butler?"

"I shot him—fair and square. Bud Russell and I changed his saddle, took his guns and left mine, changed everything. Then I killed his horse with my saddle on it. I sure hated to give up that saddle! After a couple o' weeks—when the coyotes and buzzards had had a chance—McCullough rode down there. He saw nobody could tell the difference between my bones and Butler's, so Mac gave out the story that he had found my bones while he was out looking for a stray horse."

"But why? Why did you make people think you were dead?"

"Well, one reason was that I was tired of eatin' with my back to a wall. Twice I was shot at with a rifle—eatin'. Once right here at Mac's, through a window. It was driving Kate crazy. The cup I was drinking from was busted under my nose—cut my lips—got a little scar there yet.

"To be honest, kid, they had me on the jump. There were a dozen men that would have shot me from the nearest bush. That was it; they were using rifles when I wasn't looking. I'm pretty good with a .45 and they all knew it. An' Allister had to get me out of the way for I would have gone after him on sight, an' he knew it. Besides, I had to do something to quiet Kate—she knew they would get me. I'll shoot with any man if he's where I can see him, but when they get to blazing away at me in the dark, I get sorta nervous. An' Kate—she was wild. So when we caught Fuzzy Butler——"

"But why give him a fair chance like that? Russell told me. He might have shot you—if your hand had slipped just a little—he might have——"

"He might have, sure. But kid, the rottenest thing on the range is a killer. They always jump the draw—that's the way they get their name. An' I don't want that sort of a name.

"So I lit out to Turges Cañon to lay low for a while. But I couldn't just lie on my back an' whistle a tune. I had to be doing something.

"There's a big valley over there back of the mountains. Old Sawyer took me over there years ago, bear-hunting. I climbed over an' had another look at it. Then I decided to go on the rustle—for Star Y stock.

"You see, this last big trouble had busted loose when I told Renalds that Allister was stealing right and left—and that the Star Y was part mine. He said there wasn't a hair on the ranch that belonged to me, and as for stealing—he said he was able to take care of *his* property, and any man was welcome to what he could run off—and not be hung for. So I set out to show him, and to get myself a bunch of cows. I figured I had a right to a few Star Y cows and horses.

"Russell and I got off with a good string of horses, then they sent old Sawyer up there to catch the rustlers. He caught us. The old fellow came right in and sat down at our fire almost before we knew there was anybody around—and we thought we were keeping watch!

"Well, when he found out what was up, he threw in with us. He always liked me. Our father once pulled him out when the Indians had pegged him down over an ant hill,

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and there was nothing old Sawyer wouldn't do for the colonel. And he never liked Renalds. He could see, the same as all of us, that Renalds was robbing the Star Y range and building up the 44 Circle. Besides, it wasn't rustling to steal my own cows, though old Mac didn't like it. He said it wasn't right.

"Then you came, an' Bud Russell happened to be there at the ranch trying to find out what the fellows thought of the rustlers. And he sure liked you from the start. He came a-jumpin' to tell me about you—but you ought to pull his nose off for what he did to you when you caught him stealing those cows! He told me what you had done to Buck Blevins with that cane—and say, speakin' of Buck, you oughtn't have made a real cowpuncher like Buck drive in that milch cow. That was Mexican work. And Buck, he's simply crazy about little Jess Frazier. I'm 'fraid you goin' have trouble with him—if I don't see him first an'——"

"Now listen, Bob. I don't care a thing in the world about Jess Frazier."

"Well maybe you don't, but——"

"And if Buck has any quarrel with me, I don't want you to take it off my hands. I'll do——"

"Say, Buck is one of my good friends. You couldn't stir up a fight between us. If I see him first I'll simply tell him that you are all right.

"I made Bud Russell promise not to tell you I wasn't dead, an' Kate too. I thought you'd been over to see her long before this. An' I'm powerful glad Kate's changed her mind about you. I broke out of the cañon two or three times to come over and see her. I couldn't just stay up there an' twiddle my thumbs. I didn't want you to know I wasn't dead.

"I thought one of these days I sorta get around where you was an' look you over. An' I was sure mighty glad to hear Bud say you were standing up for nesters against Allister and Renalds. I knew you were all right after Bud said that Slim Simmons was talkin' up for you. Slim's a powerful hard man to please.

"I didn't expect to find you here tonight, that's a fact! I sent a little letter to Kate this afternoon by Bud tellin' her a few things—same things you've probably wrote to a lot of pretty girls. I guess they all like it. I didn't want any nesters to catch sight of me, for I wasn't sure that I wanted to come to life. And Kate just *would* ride against that stampede. She'd ride against anything, that girl. I'll bet you don't have 'em like she is back East! And she came out so excited she could hardly talk—which you allow is some excitement in a woman—and told me all about what you'd been doin'.

"I thought I could travel some, but here for ten years I've been lettin' Renalds boss me around like he owned the place, and you—why you old onery kid, you take ever'thing away from him in no time, put Jim Harvey's hands up in the air, backed Red Allister against a corral, an' shot Tom School. School was one of the men that would do anything for Allister. He's got a lot of them kind, Allister has. The 44 Circle is a bad outfit. Renalds thinks a cowman has to be a gunman—maybe that's one reason he seemed at times to sorta like me. I never hurt many people, but I'm pretty good with a gun.

"But —— your good-for-nothin' soul, kid, I sure thought you'd be a knock-kneed little pee-wee with specs an'—say, I wish I'd gone East an' got some education too. It might have put some sense in me!

"Tonight after Kate got away ahead of the herd and made for home, I looked back and saw you still ridin' up an' down along the front of those cows, I didn't know who you were, but I said, 'that fellow's goin' get run down or shot or something,' so I turned back to tell you to get out. An' old Inkdrop put his foot in a hole. I sure loved that horse, kid; and I sure thought I was a goner too. I didn't know you were following me. Lord, kid, what'd you ever stay in that tenderfoot country so long for, when you oughta been on the range!

"Now let's be gettin' back up to the house. Some of those cows, they may have got through the fire, because hay an' brush it burns up fast. If I'd a-been Mac I'd have set fire to the whole range, but he wouldn't hear of it. Wherever the cattle have passed it's just like ploughed ground, so he knew the fire wouldn't spread much from his hay an'——"

The horse was coughing and trembling.

"Poor ——," said Bob. "He'll never be of no more use."

"He won't need to be. He's done enough this night to earn the pasture the rest of his life."

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XXX

ALL through the night there was confusion and terror at McCullough's.

Cattle did break through the fire-line. The scattered hay burned out in places in front of the mile-long fence before the herd had passed, and a thin stream of cattle, hemmed in on all other sides, bolted ahead.

Men saw them coming and shot; but they came on though men dropped rifles for pitchforks and tried to scatter the burning hay and brush over the breach.

It was afterward said by some one who was near that old Sawyer dropped on a knee right in line with this charge and brought down eleven leading cows, one after another before barely escaping as he leaped aside when the cattle, bunching up to three or four abreast passed through the gap in the fire.

Hundreds of cows were shot in the wild hour of the stampede, and some lay wounded and bellowing; others were quickly trampled into silence.

A more tragic thing happened at another burned-out place before the herd had melted in flight sufficiently to ease off the mass pressure, with the furious cowboys on its flanks, against the fire-line. A long horn steer caught sight of the opening and made for it, followed by a stream of cattle.

A boy, blackened by smoke and ash, saw them coming. He seized a pitchfork, drove it into a pile of burning hay and ran forward, brandishing the flame. The cattle parted before him, jumping to the right and left, but came on, crowded up, and he was knocked down. The cattle's hoofs, like chopping-knives, passed over him.

By the time the stampede was broken several hundred cattle had entered McCullough's, and were racing over the fields. They scattered up about the home grounds, driving the terrified women into the house, into wagons, even into trees, where they remained while the cattle charged blindly through piles of household goods, blundered against sheds and corrals, bellowing frantically, and in places breaking down fences and getting out.

The men withdrew from the south fence and came up nearer the house to remain on guard in case the cowboys should try to ride in; and they had trouble with the cattle loose about the place. Many men were hurt and one afterward died from injuries received. The cattle would charge a man on foot; and it was not until McCullough and others got on horseback and chased the cattle in the darkness through broken fences that it was safe to be on foot around the house.

A big fire was built, and tired men dropped to the ground. The faces of all were black as masks, covered with smoke and dust. Some searched out their women, and in identifying themselves were regarded with anxious doubts by the women, whose relieved fears likely as not found expression in the mere remark—

"Well you're a sight!"

Or—

"I wouldn't have knowed it was you!"

Many of the men pulled and poked among the scattered piles, looking for what belonged to them. They talked little, cursing the cattlemen with short phrases in weary tones. Here and there some one flashed out a fierce defiance, then was quiet; and now and then some one commented in a slow sentence on the night's work, and wondered what next. But over and over, like an orchestral motif, from low sullen voices fell the words—

"We'll not leave the country!"

"Lord, only two o'clock," said a weary man, putting back his thick watch. "I thought it'd been a week 'most."

"Think they'll try it again?" a man inquired of McCullough, who was going about, picking a guard, telling them where to stand watch.

"No," said McCullough. "They'll never try *that* again."

"No," repeated McCullough, when Norman, as a dozen others had done, asked the same question. "Every steer's dropped a dollar's worth of meat or more. I don't know how they ever came to do it this onct. A cowman hates a stampede worse'n a horse hates a rattler. Red Allister, more'n anybody talked 'em into it this onct—but Allister's done for on this range. There may be some shootin', but I don't look for even much o' that. The cowboys are goin' be powerful busy roundin' up their stock, an' gettin' 'em to market or back on their range. It was a big fool plan, an' it failed. They must all have been loco to ever do it!"

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OLD SAWYER had brought in the trampled body of the boy, carrying it in his arms all the way. He was a powerful man, and seemed as old as the hills, with something of their silence in his wisdom.

People crowded about by the fire, staring down, wondering who it could be, for the clothes were in bloody rags, the face had been pounded with hoofs that were covered with dust and ashes.

Old Sawyer laid the body down and stood up, gazing about from face to face, then silently pushed his way between the people, and went off.

Maw Frazier suddenly cried out and fell across the body, seizing a broken hand, for on the wrist she had recognized the plaited bracelet of horse hair. Jess knelt down beside her, crying. Somebody went out to the group of men on guard by the west fence and told Frazier; and he came and stood silently, hat in hand, looking down. He said nothing and stood motionless. Tears fell from his lean dust-covered face. Then he walked slowly away, his hands twisting and gripping his hat.

Maw Frazier wailed out the inarticulate lament of the woman who has lost her only son in battle, and not until dawn would she let herself be led away from her boy.

"I shore am glad I wasn't ridin' *behind* that herd," said Simmons to Norman, as they walked off together after laying the blanket over Wally's body. "I seen some men die, an' it didn't hurt me none. But this here's diff'rent. Them Fraziers are real folks—if they are nesters."

"Maw is a mighty fine woman."

"All women is," Simmons answered slowly. "Even some of the bad ones, like them girls at Reddin's—like when Barney was shot. Women they know how to suffer more than us men."

XXXI

McCULLOUGH came to Norman just before daybreak.

"I've been thinkin' it over, and you ought to get to Martinez an' meet your uncle tomorrow when he comes. He likes you—your mother used to write him about you, and how well you were doin'. You are the only thing old Renalds ever did talk about much as bein' somebody he did like. That's what made some of us that knowed Bob—well, sorta not think quite so much of you. Now you ought to get to town and have a talk with him, first of anybody.

"He's queer, Renalds is. He may be plumb mad when he finds you've thrown in with nesters. Most likely he will. He may take it different. You can't tell. But if you was me, I shore would get to him before Red Allister has the chanct. He thinks a lot of Red, an' you'd better get in your story first. Red ain't going to lose no chanct."

"For Heaven's sake, tell me why? Why does he like him?"

"Why does he like Red Allister an' put up with him? That's a long story, an' when onct I told my idee of it to your uncle after Colonel Standish died—why, your uncle said he didn't want me on the ranch no more, so I come off up here. Renalds, he shore sticks by them he likes an' you can't budge 'im. If he once puts faith in a fellow that fellow has a mighty good friend. I don't like Renalds an' I don't think he's plumb honest, but there ain't none of the sneak in him like there is in Red Allister.

"If Renalds is goin' steal, he steals a whole ranch—like he has done with the Star Y, with everybody looking. He never tried to get Bob out of the way, that's Allister's doin's. Renalds just told Bob he would run the ranch to suit hisself an' if Bob didn't like it—well, he could leave. An' of course Bob couldn't do nothin' as long as your mother was living.

"But about Allister, you see, nigh twenty year ago now your uncle he was caught overnight stoppin' in an old 'dobe house down on the Santee River. Lot of brush down there, an' this Mexican 'dobe was mostly used by fellers that wasn't loafin' 'round where folks could see 'em. And it was some o' these same fellers your uncle was a-lookin' for.

"You must've heard somethin' about it when you was a boy?"

"That big fight, you mean? But I don't quite place Allister."

"I'll tell you how Allister come in. Your uncle, he never was afraid of nothin'. I'll say that. He runs over everybody that gets in his way, little fellers or big ones. He don't know what it is to be scared. An' he come down there with just one o' his men to ask some personal questions of some fellers that he figgered weren't above rustlin' a little 44 Circle stock.

"Them rustlers, five of them they was,

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they jumped him after dark. Sneaked up an' opened fire right through the window. That's the way your 'bad' man always fights, then he goes around with notches cut on his gun.

"They killed the man with your uncle, and they got your uncle twict in the body. He throwed hisself down on the floor, pertending he was dead. Them fellers come stamping in, cheerful-like. Your uncle cut loose with a gun in each hand, and there was so much smoke you couldn't see who was which. He got two of them the first shot, then they was all mixed up with knives and guns. Your uncle is a powerful strong man, an' a fighter.

"Well, all of a sudden Red Allister he busts in an' kills one of the men that is amaking for the door, an' blows a hole through another your uncle is a-fightin' with. Another one is so badly hurt he can't hardly crawl, and Red put a gun to that feller's head an' shot. So they all are dead —an' can't tell nothin'.

"Your uncle always believed Red Allister saved his life.

"Allister he said he was campin' down to the river, an' when he heard the shootin' he jumped on his hoss bareback, an' come.

"Red's name, it wasn't none too good, but a lot of fellers had the same kind of name them days.

"But what I always believed, and what I told your uncle, was that Red was in with that gang, an' bein' a skunk, when he saw how the fight was goin', he turned on his pardners. He made sure there weren't none to conterdict his story.

"Your uncle, he was in a bad way, an' Red helped him to get home. Red wasn't no fool. He was more or less hidin' out at the time, an' he knowed a big man in the country, like your uncle was, could help him get along in a lot of ways, an' your uncle shore did. He put Red to work, an' about three year ago made him foreman of the 44 Circle. Red he is clever, an' your uncle he is queer. You can't tell him nothin' he don't want to hear. He wouldn't never listen to nothin' ag'in' Red, an' Red he just naturally got to thinkin' he owns the earth.

"Now I've talked a lot to you, Norman, for a man who's learned to keep his mouth shut. You're all wore out, I know; but you take a good hoss an' light out for home. You get a bit of sleep, then take another hoss an' go for town. You ought to make Reddin's late tonight. Then tomorrow you can go on into town an' be there when Renalds comes."

"Hadn't I better take Bob along? Then Bob can tell all about Fuzzy Butler—and Allister."

"No, I reckon not. If it comes to a show down, your uncle might believe Red Allister before he would Bob. Bob he was too clost to some of us nesters. You go alone. It's your own good I'm thinkin' about. Bob he's like my boy, only he does powerful crazy things—like rustlin' Star Y stock. Of course I want to see him get what he's got a right to, but he'll be took care of anyway. I've got something laid by for him an' Kate, if they ever quit their quarrelin'. But since they have been tryin' to kill Bob, Kate she has changed a lot. She ain't near so flighty with Bob.

"Here's my gun. I see yours is missin'. You may need it. I got plenty more around."

NORMAN was tired, worn out; but getting a bite of breakfast that Kate herself fixed for him in the kitchen, and drinking heavily of strong coffee, he climbed into the saddle of a horse Bob had picked out, and with a weary wave of his hand to Simmons, Bud Russell and Bob, rode off.

Cattle were scattered far and wide, and as he went on he saw horsemen galloping here and there over ridges and down draws, pushing out the weary cattle, gathering them again into herds. Those men, too, he reflected with satisfaction would have to stay in their saddles a long time.

It had been watchfully noted by the nesters all during the night that no dots of fire were appearing on the prairie. The cowboys had not fired any of the deserted houses. They had wondered about this, but Simmons's guess was that the cowmen from the south were plumb disgusted at the change in the Star Y's attitude toward nesters, since Harvey had promised to take no part in the stampede; and so, being busy enough as it was for some days to come, the cowboys didn't feel like wasting time riding about burning out the range pests. If the Star Y wanted them on its range, all right. Besides, Allister's influence was broken, and his had been the vindictive spirit in the nester war.

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It was about twenty-five miles from McCullough's to the Star Y home ranch. Norman rode rapidly. He arrived home about ten o'clock, turned the horse over to Matheson, called for another to be ready, then went into the house and after telling Murietta to call him about noon, kicked off his boots and threw himself on the big swinging couch, pulled a serape over his legs and went to sleep.

What seemed a few minutes later he was demanding, "What's the matter?" of Murietta, who was gently shaking him.

"It is after twelve, *señor*. Your dinner is ready."

"It has to wait till I have a bath and change clothes," said Norman, getting up and staggering from sleepiness.

He reached the hay ranch about four o'clock, stopped to water and rest his horse and have a steak, then pushed on toward Reddin's. It was some fifty miles to Reddin's; and he was already worn out. His body ached with soreness. He dismounted every ten or fifteen miles, and felt that he was walking on short stilts; and he began to have vague but hopeful ideas about saddles made with down-pads. And he had thought that he was saddle-broke!

He got to Reddin's about three o'clock in the morning, feeling more dead than alive; and he had to make a great clatter before Reddin, ponderous, bare-footed, in a long flannel nightgown—one of the few refinements of civilization to be found at the roadhouse—came with lamp in hand to the door and let him in.

He found Reddin apoplectically surly, and sensed that something was wrong.

"What's the matter?" demanded Norman, with an edge to his tone.

Reddin, with asthmatic pauses, explained that he had gone to bed late, and that now before getting up he had lain in bed shouting for somebody to go down and let Norman in; but that the servants, thinking of their own rest, had refused to be awakened.

"What you doin' along here this time o' night?" Reddin then asked, not pleasantly, and breathing noisily, looking at him with close suspicion.

"I'm going in to meet Mr. Renalds. He comes tomorrow."

Reddin grunted inhospitably, but some of the suspicion faded from his heavy face. Then—

"Want a drink?"

"No—a bed."

"Hear you've been havin' some trouble over your way?" said Reddin, surlily, but showing that he was a little pleased by what he had heard.

"Did you?"

"Stampede cleaned Mac's out I hear. When them cattle git away there's no tellin' where they'll go. Nothin' left o' Mac's I hear."

"How did you hear about that?"

"A feller he rode through this afternoon—'bout four o'clock—that was there last night an' saw it all."

"You're a liar," said Norman, who was tired and sore, and did not like Reddin anyhow.

"Here—here—don't you call me a liar!"

Reddin puffed hoarsely, glaring, raising the lamp as if about to fling it at Norman's head.

"Well you are," Norman answered firmly, but more in weariness than anger. "You just heard that there was going to be a stampede, an' jumped at the conclusion. And you're way off in your guess."

"I ain't made no guess. I tell you a feller——"

"Oh stop it, Reddin. I left McCullough's at sun-up. I've been riding hard. How could anybody that was there last night have got in here ten hours before I did?"

"Well, a feller come anyhow," Reddin growled, puffing. "An' I hear you shot Tom School—one o' Allister's men."

"Who told you that?"

"That same feller," said Reddin, grouchily triumphant.

"What's his name?"

"He didn't give no name."

"Well, you give me one!"

"You'd better go up an' ask him—he's upstairs. You jest go ask him!"

There was the suggestion of both a menace and a sneer in Reddin's voice.

"I'm asking you."

"I don't talk 'bout folks' business," Reddin answered with self-satisfied firmness.

Then as Norman's arm moved quickly, Reddin misunderstood the gesture and blurted anxiously—

"Buck Blevins!"

Norman forgot the twinge of pain at the back of his leg.

"Put down that lamp. We are going to talk."

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"Now—now listen, Mr. Standish. I—I don't——"

"Put down that lamp. You are acting as though you're about to drop it."

Reddin, with the long nightgown flapping about his ankles, and breathing noisily, walked to a table and set down the lamp.

Norman followed.

"Now Reddin, see here. I understand Buck is looking for me, to have a little trouble with me. What do you know about it?"

Reddin frowned thoughtfully. He knew all about it. Buck had been drinking too much that evening, and had talked freely and violently; and also spent money recklessly.

Reddin did not care so much about Buck; but Reddin and Allister were friends. On the other hand, Norman was generally understood to be a favorite with Renalds, and it was not wise for any man to get old Renalds on his trail.

Reddin sat down in a chair; he stared fixedly at Norman.

"I'll get my death o' cold, barefooted this-a-way."

"Wrap 'em up in your nightgown."

"Buck he'd got business in town. I've got to have a drink."

"What business? He was working for the 44 Circle. How does it come he left just when Allister needed men?"

"Buck he brung a letter—important letter. He was takin' it to town."

"I see!" said Norman quickly. "Allister sent him in with it. It's for my uncle?"

"That's what Buck said."

"What else did he say—about me?"

"Oh," Reddin answered, ponderously soothing, "Buck he's been drinkin' too much to know what he was sayin'. He's drunk right now. I hear snorin' as I come down-stairs."

"I don't care anything about his snoring. I want to know what he said of me."

Reddin, at first irritated by being roused and suspicious that Norman was after Buck, now tried to smooth things over.

"He's jest a young fool, Mr. Standish, an' been drinkin'—hard. Buck he'll be all right when he sobers up. He allows you ortn't made him take in that cow to Missus Welch. He allows a Mexican could've done it as well as him. An' ever'body's been sayin' as how you are in love with that Frazier gal—that's riled him some, 'cause Buck, he——"

"Well I'm going to have that letter now," said Norman. "And if he's sober in the morning he can talk to me—anyway he pleases."

"You ain't a-goin' take that letter?" Reddin asked, gasping for breath, at the same time rubbing the soles of his feet. "Why Allister wrote it!"

"I'll see that Mr. Renalds gets it—when I am ready to give it to him."

"But Red he won't like that—nor Buck," Reddin warned, breathing louder.

"I haven't been paying much attention lately to what I thought Red Allister would like."

"You'd a-better. He shore stands well with your uncle."

"Did Buck tell you what happened yesterday at South Fork bunk-house? No, I can see that he didn't. Well come with me. If Buck wakes up, you can talk soothingly to *him*. And anyway, you can hold the lamp while I find the letter."

"No, I won't. You want to git me into trouble."

"All right. I'll go myself."

Norman picked up the lamp and started up-stairs. Reddin followed, protesting wheezily.

Heavy snores indicated the room. Norman tried the door. It was unlocked. He stepped in, holding the lamp above his head. Reddin stood in the doorway, staring anxiously.

Buck lay on the bed, boots on, spurs on, hat on the floor. He lay on his back, face up, mouth open.

Norman stared at him, half-pityingly and with disgust. Buck was a good-looking young man, strong and well-built; well-liked. But he now looked drunkenly stupid, his face was puffed and red. His clothes were soiled where his trembling hand had spilled whisky over the front of his vest and shirt.

Norman put the lamp down and reached to the inside pocket of Buck's vest. His hand touched a letter. He drew it out. It was addressed in a clumsy illiterate hand to C. C. Renalds.

He thrust it into his own trousers pocket, picked up the lamp, again looked down at Buck for a moment, then went out, closing the door.

"All right, Reddin. Now give me a bed."

"You'd better let me have that letter, Mr.

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Standish. I'll tell Buck it dropped outa his pocket."

"You tell him nothing of the kind. I'm riding early. If Buck isn't up, you tell him I took it, and that he can come after me or wait here. I'll be this way again tomorrow—I mean, this evening. If he's sober in the morning I'll tell him myself."

Reddin shook his head.

"No good'll come of it."

He led the way to a room. Norman held up the lamp and looked about. A candle was on the table. He handed the lamp to Reddin and lighted the candle.

"Good night," said Norman, sitting on the bed and pulling at a boot.

"I wish you'd give me that letter, Mr. Standish. Buck—Allister too—'ll be plumb wild. It ain't a good plan to go ag'in' Red Allister."

"Good night!" said Norman, pointedly, and began yanking at the other boot.

Reddin went out, walking heavily on flat bare feet. The flannel nightgown gave him a preposterous appearance. He reminded Norman of a comic ghost.

Norman grinned wearily, closed the door, propped a chair against it, threw off his outer clothes and thrust himself down under the blanket, struck out the candle flame with his hand—and was asleep.

When he awoke it was daylight, and his watch told him that it was after seven o'clock.

He was not sure, but thought that somebody had been at the door for the chair did not seem quite so close as he had placed it, but it had held firmly as a prop by having a leg set in a crack of the floor. And anyway, the letter was still in his pocket. He looked carefully to the loads in his revolver and went into the hall.

No one was in sight. As he passed Buck's door he stopped to listen. Buck was not snoring, but still breathing heavily.

Norman went down-stairs.

Clara, with her black hair combed straight back and hanging down her shoulders, waddled back and forth, looking for something. She was untidy, even sloppy; but her hair was always combed and her big loose one-piece dresses were never very dirty, and she was always calm as if indifferent to whatever might happen.

She spoke pleasantly, but without interest.

"The boss, he is sick. He don't feel like getting up. I can't find the bitters. Toina, she says she hopes he never gets up."

"How is Toina?"

"She ain't been the same since Barney was killed. She thinks too much and always has worries. Some days she even gets mad at me."

Clara talked placidly and waddled without haste, looking among the bottles, under the bar, in cupboards.

Toina came in. Her hair too was down. She wore some kind of loose red wrapper. Her eyes were sunken, with dark splotches under the sockets, her mouth thin and drawn.

"Give me some whisky, Clara—" then she looked at Norman—"*you* here again?"

This with uninterested surprise.

"Buck Blevins is upstairs. He was crazy drunk last night and spending money, and talking about some folks, kid."

She looked at Norman squarely, doubtfully.

"He means to put some holes in your heart. If I was you, I'd be ridin'."

"That's just what I am going to do."

"Run?"

Her thin lips twisted scornfully.

"I'll be back tonight. Now I want some breakfast."

"Think I'm goin' to bring it to you!" Tonia snapped. "I knew the first time I laid eyes on you—an' look Clara, he's wearin' a gun!"

Clara grunted, and having found the bitters, poured out a whisky glassfull into a tumbler, then filled the tumbler half-full of whisky and went out.

Norman went toward the dining-room. Tonia's voice followed scornfully—

"You haven't got the courage of a sick cat!"

Norman breakfasted on pancakes, a steak, fried potatoes and coffee, then saddled his horse and started for Martinez; and as he rode, he began to suspect himself of cowardice because of the relief he felt at having got away from Reddin's without meeting Buck Blevins.

XXXII

BY RIDING hard he reached Martinez shortly after noon, put up the horse at the Emporium feed corral, and went to the hotel.

The hotel seemed as deserted as the first

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day he had stopped there. The boarders had finished their dinner and after a drink or two had gone back to their stores to doze until disturbed by chance customers. The town was complacently sleepy. It knew that shipping from the Fall round-ups would soon fill its outskirts with cattle, its streets with people.

Norman went into the barroom.

George Welch, his hair as uncombed as ever, sat at a table, leaning forward on his arms, half-asleep.

"Hello there!" he shouted, looking up at the clatter and jingle of Norman's boots. "I wouldn't hardly have known it was you!"

He came forward, lanky, awkward, good-natured, thrusting out his long hand, still calloused from the hard work he had done before becoming a tavern-keeper.

"I reckon as how there ain't nobody the missus 'll be so glad to see, an' me nuther. Why, y'know them kids is gittin' so fat, I'll swan you wouldn't know 'em! Betty, she's the two-year-old, she goes out an' tries to milk that ol' cow herself. Waltzes 'round 'tween her legs with a tin cup. I never seen sech a cow. Like a dang pet dawg. I guess you want some grub. Have a drink, young feller. Have two drinks!"

"I'll take some grub."

George went to the door and bawled:

"Maw! Hey, maw!"

From far away a shrill impatient voice answered—

"Now what ye want?"

"Come 'ere! See who's here!"

Mrs. Welch came, still worn out, sunken of chest, hurried. Her calico dress sagged behind. Her hair was tightly caught back, still frayed at loose ends. Her thin face was set in an expression of impatience, but after a slow glance to make sure who it was, she smiled anxiously and eagerly put out a thin hand, shriveled by water into which she dipped for washing and scrubbing. Yet for all of her hurrying work her clothes were not clean, the hotel was not clean.

"Oh, how are ye? You're lookin' fine! I don't know how us Welches is ever goin' do enough to pay you back for that there cow, Mr. Standish. You ought to see them chil'ren! An' she's so gentle like. Why I'm out there a-pettin' her when I ort to be workin'. But she ain't like no cow I ever saw, an' so purty! Buck he was shore mad about havin' to bring her, but he brung her in good shape. He said if it hadn't been for the chil'ren he wouldn't have brung her at all—an' ain't it too bad about Buck?"

"You mean the way he's drinkin'?"

"Ain't you heard?" cried George and Mrs. Welch together.

"No, what's wrong?"

"It was him an' Mentone that held up that train! 'Member that no 'count railroad man the which used to hang around town here?"

"They caught him away up there in Pueblo!" shouted George.

"He said him an' Buck Blevins held up the train," Mrs. Welch went on rapidly. "Off'cers come down yesterday. The sheriff from San Carlos is with 'em."

"Mentone said Buck shot the feller in that express car."

"But nobody here in town has heard o' Buck since it happened. I don't b'lieve he shot that feller," said Mrs. Welch. "Buck ain't that sort o' boy. He tol' some fellers here in town when he was hangin' 'round after he brung the cow that he was plannin' to go to Texas."

"Them off'cers had dinner here yesterday," said George. "They said Mentone was the most 'sprized man when he was caught. He told them off'cers him an' Buck was sure nobody'd ever suspected 'em."

"Where are they now?" asked Norman.

"You ain't seen Buck down your way, have ye?" demanded Mrs. Welch, anxiously.

There was no doubt as to where her sympathy lay.

"He never came back to the Star Y," said Norman.

"That's what Julio told 'em," said George.

Julio was in town with the saddle-horse and buckboard that Norman had sent for his uncle.

"Where did the officers go? Who are they?"

"Railroad officers, two of 'em. An' the sheriff. They went to look for the money Mentone said he'd cached over to Gus Gibbons' house—over on the White Water, 'bout fifty mile nor'east o' here. He said him an' Buck whacked up an' then he rode one way an' Buck t'other."

"They're due back tonight, then they're goin' down your-all's way," said Mrs. Welch, "to see if they can't find something

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out about where Buck is. Them railroad off'cers 'pear to think if Buck didn't feel anybody knowed it was him that he'd go back to work for a while like nothin' had happened. They said fellers do that frequent."

"It seems to me the officers talked a good deal," Norman commented.

George explained:

"They said there was more chanct of catchin' a feller if ever'body knowed the law was after him, than if they tried to keep it quiet, 'cause then his friends'd be sure to hear of it anyhow an' tell him, an' other people wouldn't be on the lookout."

"Train-robbin' is hangin' in this country!" cried Mrs. Welch, excitedly. "An' Buck, he's only a kid."

"How did they come to catch Mentone?"

" 'Pears like Mentone was drinkin' an' gamblin' up there in Pueblo," said George, "an' havin' too much money——"

"He talked too much about how he'd got even up with the railroad," Mrs. Welch cut in. "An' him an' Buck had swore that if either one of 'em was caught, he wasn't to tell on the other. Then Mentone up an' told the first thing that it was Buck. I said it was Mentone right from the first. I never did like that feller!"

"But maw, Mr. Standish here wants some dinner."

"He can shore have it," she cried, and hurried out.

"George," said Norman slowly, watching until Mrs. Welch was out of sight, "if you knew where Buck is, what would you do?"

"I'd shore send word for him to light out—to leave a note for the off'cers tellin' where the money is, an' git! If they find the money they won't be so hot after him. The sheriff he was plumb disgusted. He wanted to be ridin' down your way after Buck, but them railroad off'cers want to go over to Gus Gibbons' first to look for the money."

Norman did not know what he ought to do. He did not want to feel that he had done anything to help the officers catch a man that was unfriendly with him, and if Buck had shot down that express man he deserved to be taken.

He realized, too, that it was almost sure to come out that he had seen Buck at Reddin's; so that if he kept still, Norman saw where he might be involved into making uncomfortable explanations.

If nobody had been killed in the robbery, Norman would not have hesitated; but now he did hesitate. Buck was almost sure to remain at Reddin's, waiting for Norman to return that way—if indeed he was not foolish enough to ride into town. And if Buck did wait at Reddin's the officers would almost surely find him.

"George," he said, "Buck is at Reddin's. He was coming into town—may come anyhow. If he doesn't come, he'll be stopping at Reddin's some time."

"The dad-burned fool!" George exclaimed.

Then, after a pause: "Reddin's been after my nigger—he can play a fiddle some—to come down there to his road-house. 'Limpy's' a decent nigger, but he allows as how fiddle-playin' is more to his likin' than doin' chores, so he's been thinkin' some o' goin'. I'll send him today. Right now. He can ride like a leech."

"Have him tell Buck to make for Turges Cañon. He'll find a well-stocked camp somewhere back there."

"Say, it ain't goin' do Buck no good to join up with rustlers! He wants to git away an' forget all his meanness."

"No rustlers there now. He can push across the mountains and get out somehow."

"Do you git them rustlers out?"

"They've quit," Norman said briefly.

It was too long a story to explain just at this time.

"I'll shore have Limpy tell 'im. Limpy he likes Buck too. Ever'body does."

Mrs. Welch called Norman to dinner.

The dining-room was empty. As he sat at the table a little baby in a dirty dress, eating bread and butter with sugar on it, poked a small head through the kitchen door.

"Here Betty, come here," Mrs. Welch called shrilly. "Here's Mr. Standish that sent you that nice cow. See how fat she's gittin', Mr. Standish?"

The baby stared a moment, then withdrew; instantly peeking again.

Norman did not think that the child looked particularly fat, but it certainly was not so pinched of face, and had at least energy enough to be shy.

"An' the baby—I weaned him an' put him on milk, an' he's been fine, Mr. Standish. What's that cow worth? We shore want to pay you."

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"Oh about twenty dollars. Milch cows aren't of much value to us. But you just keep her here, and some day if you want to buy her, it'll be about twenty dollars."

"But all that hay you sent in?"

"We'd have to feed her anyhow. And it's no trouble when a wagon is coming to town to send along a little hay."

Mrs. Welch knew very well that he put it that way to keep her from feeling like "charity folks"; but since he had put it that way she didn't feel like "charity folks," and was even more grateful.

"I'm tryin' to git George to go back to farmin," she said. "We got a letter from them there Davises wantin' to know if we'll sell back to 'em. They don't like it where they are at. An' you know, Mr. Standish, a town it ain't no place for a man.

"George he has to stay up late there in the bar, an' he don't never git enough sleep. An' I'm jest wearin' myself plumb out in this old place. I don't mind farmin' work —you can see things grow. But George he allows as how all the good farmin' land is already took up. But we could git a wagon an' go on some place where they ain't so many people."

XXXIII

THIS day there were many people down to watch the one-ten come in. The report had got around that Mentone was being brought back, and almost everybody was at the depot. Ordinarily the one-ten went through without stopping, except at the water-tank, a quarter of a mile up the track. But all knew that it would stop today, for Renalds was coming, and perhaps Mentone.

Men squatted about in the shade, talking of the robbery, though everybody had long before said three or four times all that they could think to say of the robbery. They now whittled and chewed tobacco, rolled cigarets, knocked out pipes and refilled them. Even the dyspeptic operator, Keyes, broke his day-time sleep to come down, and he bustled about with a crabbed air of importance.

The train was sighted far off.

The men stood up slowly, then moved around to the side of the station that faced the tracks, and they leaned up against the wall.

The train whistled, shrilly demanding the right of way—then slowed down at the water-tank. Norman could see the splash of spilled water in the sunlight.

The train crept down to the station.

Norman walked along the track, glancing back and forth; then he saw a tall figure step down near the end of the train, followed by a porter who placed the big grip on the ground.

Norman ran forward and was face to face with his uncle.

Renalds was tall, big, but gaunt, a dark-eyed, dark-bearded man, deliberate in manner, more deliberate in speech, with a disconcerting steadiness of gaze and little to say. He wore a big black hat and a long black square-cut coat that increased the appearance of height. If he smiled it was behind his beard. No one had ever heard him laugh.

At the first glance Norman began to understand why Bob Standish might have been baffled for years by the taciturn composure of this great dark man.

He now looked at Norman carefully, putting out his hand, but speaking as though he had seen him but a few weeks before—

"How are you, Norman?"

"Pretty well, thank you. Did you have a good trip."

"How's everything at the ranch?"

"Not very well," said Norman.

Renalds looked at him, waiting to hear.

But Norman picked up the heavy grip, saying:

"I'll tell you about it at the hotel."

Then they walked together in silence. The train went on. Mentone had not been brought back.

Men spoke respectfully to Renalds. He answered with a nod and a word as if greeting strangers. Julio smiled and touched his hat. Renalds nodded hardly looking toward him.

"I sent in both the buckboard and a saddle-horse. I didn't know which way you cared to travel."

"I'll ride, of course."

"Ride" on the range meant "horse-back."

The grip was heavy. Norman changed hands two or three times, then his uncle took it—just reached out and took it, without saying anything. It made Norman think of what he had heard about his uncle taking anything that he wanted; and the grip appeared to have no weight in his hands.

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"You had dinner on the train?" Norman suggested.

"Yes."

They stopped at the Emporium for mail. Little Meyers greeted Renalds warmly, then going behind the postoffice rack where the clerk was distributing the scanty mail just thrown off the train, brought out many letters and a small package for Renalds.

Renalds glanced through the letters and thrust them into his pocket, unopened. Then, weighing the small package in his hand, drew out his pocket knife, opened it, and exposed a handful of small coins, gold. He looked at them without apparent interest, dropped them into his pocket and shook open the scrawled letter; read it, and handed it to Norman.

Dear sir, I am sendin you the money whitch you let me have for that sadle. I aint never goin ride for no outfit that has such fellers on it as that neffew of yourn. He is a —— fool. I like you fine, but if youve got any likin for that feller you want to keep him clear out of my sight. He tried to make a fool of me, an no man can make a fool of me an not git hurt. Yours truely,

BUCK BLEVINS.

Norman's face grew blood-red. He looked up, handing back the letter to his uncle, who took it without a word and thrust it calmly into his pocket. Then—

"What have you and Buck had trouble over?"

"The night I got here, up at the hotel, he told me to dance. Then he shot in the floor at my feet. I had a walking-stick in my hand, and I hit him across the face with it. Slim Simmons took his gun away from him. Then Buck was going to thrash me, but somebody said I was your nephew.

"Then Buck wanted to quit the Star Y, but Harvey said that he would have to see you because of what he owed the ranch. But what seems to have made him really furious was because I sent in a cow to Mrs. Welch for her children. A milch cow. And I told Harvey to make Buck bring her in. And here Buck—he robbed the train to get that money to pay you back!"

Renalds looked at him, stroked his beard, looked away, and said nothing. Norman felt uncomfortable.

"Where are the horses?" asked Renalds.

"At the Emporium corral."

"Bring them to the hotel."

Renalds walked on from the store.

Julio had followed and was waiting outside of the door.

"Go hitch up, Julio," said Norman. "Do you know where I can get another horse. I pushed mine pretty hard yesterday."

"No, *señor*. I do not."

Little Meyers had come to the door and overheard.

"I boudt two horses Friday. You're welcome, Mr. Standish to one of them fine horses. An' aboudt that lumber and stuff for Frazier—"

"I'll pay for that. It has nothing to do with the Star Y—I am personally responsible."

"No hurry, Mr. Standish. No hurry at all, there ain't. I chust wanted that I should know whether it is you or your uncle."

Norman found that neither of Meyer's two fine horses were in a class with Star Y stock, but he made his choice and gave his horse to Julio to lead back. Trotting after a buckboard would be easier than carrying a man, and the horse had been pretty hard pushed.

When Norman went to the hotel his uncle was sitting at a table, splitting letters with his knife. He read one after another carefully. Then he re-folded each as he read it, methodically returned it to the envelope and placed it to one side.

"Ready Norman?"

"Ready, sir."

"Have a drink?"

"All right."

Except that the invitation was hospitable, Norman could not have told from his uncle's speech whether he was displeased or indifferent toward him. From time to time he looked at Norman with momentary steadiness, but he might as well have been looking from behind a mask for all the expression that Norman could detect.

George was behind the bar. He said:

"That nigger o' mine quit me today. He lit out for Reddin's a while ago. Goin' play the danged fiddle. Since them rustlers killed Barney they ain't been nobody much to entertain folks at Reddin's."

Renalds eyed George inquiringly.

"Rustlers—have a fight?"

"Shore. Ain't Mr. Standish told you? Him an' Slim found a hoss at Reddin's that had been stole, an' when Mr. Standish here allowed as how he was goin' take that

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hoss home, there was an argument. Them rustlers got in the way of some lead an' was buried."

Renalds glanced quickly at Norman; and Norman felt embarrassed because he saw a bright glint, like approval, in those dark eyes.

"Tell me about it? Was it those Turges Cañon fellows?"

"No. It wasn't those. But there at Reddin's Simmons and I were shot at from the back, and they would have got us except that Barney—the consumptive boy there at Reddin's—opened up on the rustlers. He got two of them, Simmons got the other two. The horse was McCullough's."

"Oh—ho—," said Renalds, non-committally, and Norman knew that his uncle was disappointed.

"I took the horse and rode over to Frazier's that night," said Norman, firmly.

"Put them off the range, did you?"

This time there was approval in the eyes and in the calm hard tone.

"No, Mr. Renalds. They had been burned out that day—I heard of it at Reddin's. No, I did not put them off the range. I told them to stay right where they were. And I gave them an order on the Emporium for goods and lumber. At the time I thought Star Y men had done it, but it wasn't the Star Y. It was Red Allister. They have filed on that land and have the right to it."

It suddenly seemed very quiet in the saloon. George began rubbing the bar with his apron. Renalds looked steadily at Norman, and Norman returned the gaze as steadily; then—

"I am sorry if I did anything you don't approve of, but of course, I feel that I am the owner of the Star Y and ——"

Renalds checked him with a hand half-raised.

"You needn't say anything more now, Norman. There will be plenty of time later on. There are many things you don't know."

Then lifting his half-filled glass—

"Here is to your health, Norman."

"And to yours, sir," Norman answered.

They went to the horses. Norman placed the grip in the buckboard. Renalds threw up the stirrup, ran his finger under the cinches, appeared satisfied, then mounted quickly, swinging into the saddle. He sat very erect, with the unconscious ease of one who has lived in a saddle as many hours as in his bed.

Norman mounted, said, "Good-by, George," to Welch who had come out of the door, then spurred up beside his uncle.

"There has been a great deal happening since you went away. They tried to stampede McCullough's night before last—and Bob isn't dead!"

Renalds looked at him in a hard quiet way, then with no evidence of surprise, asked—

"Where has he been?"

"Bob caught Fuzzy Butler—made him confess that he was hired to kill him. Then he and Bud Russell took Butler off across the prairie, gave him two guns and at a signal opened fire. Then Bob put his saddle on Butler's horse, changed guns, belts, hats. When there was nothing left but bones McCullough pretended to find the remains."

"Why did he do that?" Renalds asked, though he appeared to have hardly any interest.

"Men had been shooting at Bob in the dark. He thought it best to play dead a while."

"Who was trying to kill him?"

"Red Allister!"

Renalds looked steadily out across the country. He seemed unconcerned. It was as if Norman was talking of something far away and long ago.

"And by the way," said Norman, drawing out the letter, "here is something Allister sent for you. Buck Blevins was bringing it. I found Buck drunk at Reddin's last night, took it from him, and brought it. Here it is."

Renalds took it leisurely. He examined the address, and, without drawing rein, took out his pocket knife, slit the envelope, returned the knife, removed the letter and read it, though the horse trotted along in a way that made reading difficult.

Then as he folded the letter he looked at Norman steadily.

"So you shot Tom School?"

"Yes. I found him branding Star Y cows without a bill of sale or any Star Y men around. There were words passed when I told them to stop it."

"Bob was with you?"

"No one was with me. I didn't see Bob until night before last. We rode out of the stampede together. His horse fell—I

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didn't know who it was until we got clear of the cattle."

"When did you see McCullough?"

"Not till the same night. I rode over there to help them beat the stampede. And we did!"

"Um," said Renalds, and again looked out across the country for a time.

After a half-mile of riding he asked:

"Then it was your own idea, helping nesters? You hadn't talked with anybody?"

"No, I had not talked with anybody before I got that idea."

"And it was your own idea, firing Harvey?"

"Yes. But didn't Allister tell you I hired him again?"

Renalds silently handed over the letter. Norman tried to read, too, while riding, but the lines jumped too much. The scrawl was illiterate. He stopped the horse. His uncle rode on.

dear Mister Renalds I want you to know that sormin standdish is playin —— with everthing. he killed tom school yisterday over to 3 trees where they was brandin cows. he throwed a gun on jim harvey an fired him. he said things to me i wouldnt have took Off no Man livin if he had 'nt been relashion of yourn. now Mister Renalds you an me has ben frens for years an i have always done rite by you. if you dont do somethin to that feller i am goin to quit. he is standin in with nesters worse than bob done. everybody knows its that frazier gal that is makin a fule of him about nesters an sech things. he has ben tellin lies about me an he will try to tell you some of them but dont you believe him till you see me. a lot of folks is riled at him an if he dont git out of the countery he is goin to git hurt bad by some of tom schools friens. this aint no threat. it is facks.

yore frien,

ALLISTER.

Norman overtook his uncle and held out the letter. Renalds took it, glancing keenly, questioningly at Norman.

"That 's a lie about the Frazier girl, but I think he 's told you pretty much the truth otherwise. Only, it wasn't being a relative of yours that kept him from shooting me—he started to draw, but Slim Simmons beat him to it, and told him to leave his guns alone."

"What had you done?"

"For one thing, I had told him to keep his Lazy A off Star Y cows. For another, I told him that he hired Butler to shoot my brother in the back!"

"You told him that?" asked Renalds, staring closely, and seeming just a wee little doubtful about it.

"Yes, I did. I didn't know then that Bob was alive."

"Um-mh," said Renalds, with vague meaning, and looked off to one side for some time, but with now and then a keen unperceived glance toward Norman.

Presently, in the same even and apparently but little interested tone, Renalds asked:

"And about Harvey? You beat him on the draw, did you?"

"No, I didn't. He wasn't expecting me to pull a gun. That was how I beat him. Then I discharged him as *your* foreman and hired him as my own!"

Renalds reined up sharply, but asked quietly—

"You did what?"

Norman felt that the crucial moment had come, and for fear of appearing timid he spoke more boldly and bluntly than he really wanted to speak:

"Sir, I came back to the ranch and found that where we used to brand fifteen thousand calves in my father's time we are now branding about four, or less. I found that Star Y cattle had been shifted to the 44 Circle range and that others were being rebranded by Allister—as his own. At my mother's death, by the terms of Colonel Standish's will, the ranch was to be divided between Bob and myself. I thought Bob was dead—so I took charge!"

"In other words," said Renalds coldly, angrily, "you thought that I was stealing from you!"

"I didn't know—I mean I didn't really think that—I thought it would be better if I took charge, as I had the right to do."

"Ride on—ahead of me, or behind. We'll take this matter up again at the ranch."

"Now look here, Mr. Renalds. There 's no use in hard feeling an' I——"

"You thought that of me!"

His low voice rang with anger. The black eyes gleamed. With a gesture of command he pointed ahead.

"Ride on!"

"Uncle, this is just as good a place to talk as the ranch will be, and ——"

"Don't call me by that name, sir! And it isn't as good a place. You 'll understand why when we are there."

"But Mr. Renalds, we might as well have it over with now, and then——"

"Norman, I am used to being obeyed on

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my range. And I am not used to being called a thief by any man! Ride on, sir."

"But if there *is* an explanation, Mr. Renalds—why not talk to me?"

Renalds looked at him steadily, held his horse steady and would not answer.

Norman rode on, burning with hot thoughts and embarrassment. He almost hoped that his uncle was in the right, but shuddered to think of the situation he, himself, would be in if there was an explanation. But, Norman reflected, the facts were too evident. Renalds had simply taken the only course that was left, one of indignation and silence, until he had time to think of some explanation.

Perhaps he hoped that he could befuddle Norman with account books, stories of losses, and such things. Norman determined to be very hard to convince, and to scrutinize incredulously everything his uncle said or attempted to show him.

It was such thoughts that all through the afternoon kept Norman company as he rode on, keeping about a mile ahead of his uncle.

LATE that evening he came to Reddin's, turned his horse over to a Mexican and entered the barroom. Two lamps were burning. Limpy was fiddling away softly, tapping the floor with his foot and grinning. No one gave attention to his playing, but the black boy, head bent against the fiddle on his shoulder, seemed listening to subtle whispers of the strings.

A stranger, shown at a second glance Norman dimly recalled having seen before, leaned against the bar.

Reddin eyed Norman sullenly and did not speak, but merely jerked his big head a little, as Norman said—

"Good evening, everybody."

Clara was behind the bar, Toina in front of it, beside the stranger.

"There he is—that's him," said Toina, venomously eager. "You can just bet he didn't come back till he knew Buck had cleared out. Now's your chance—get him, Jeff!"

Jeff Jones gazed with trouble in his eye at Norman.

Limpy stopped playing, and looked about with a glimmer of uneasiness in his big, half-sad eyes.

"Quit yer jawin'!" Reddin shouted at Toina. "Nobody needs your put-in!"

"I'll jaw all I want!" she shouted back. "You can't stop me!"

"Didn't Mr. Renalds come?" asked Reddin uneasily, glancing toward the door.

"Do you see him? Or hear him?" said Norman, in a way that challenged the hostile attitude of those about him.

"Oh-ho!" shouted Toina. "Trying to be smart, huh? Ain't he a purty thing, though?"

"I allow that he's right plumb purty," said Jeff Jones, leaning on his elbows, back to the bar, regarding Norman with disfavor.

"Get him, Jeff! You said——"

"Shut up!" bawled Reddin, returning from the door where he had peered out in the dark and listened for a moment. Then—

"Didn't Renalds come?"

Norman saw that it was the shadow of his uncle that checked the hostility of these people; and he answered recklessly—

"Not with me, he didn't!"

"He told 'em in town that Buck was here!" shrieked Toina. "He was the only one that knew it. Why don't you get him!"

"Aw," said Jeff, contemptuously, "he ain't even got his nuss, Slim Simmons along. But I see that he is packin' of a gun."

Then of Norman he asked—

"You know what that thing you've got on your hip is for?"

"Yes. It comes in handy at times—for skunks!"

Toina snatched out with wild fumbling at Jeff's holster.

"Give me that gun! I'll get him for you!"

Jeff thrust her roughly back, and, plainly putting an edge on the quarrel, said—

"You shot my side pardner, Tom School when he wasn't lookin'——"

"And Buck!" screamed the drunken Toina. "He told 'em Buck was here!"

"Did you tell in town that Buck was here?"

"Yes!" Norman answered, and following Jeff's gesture reached for his gun.

But Reddin jumped heavily toward Jeff and faced him, shouting breathlessly:

"Not in here! Not in here! You don't kill him in here! I don't want Renalds down on me!"

"Out of the way Reddin," Norman called. "Renalds doesn't give a ——! Out of the way!"

Jeff leaned to one side and shot.

Reddin, used to saloon gun-play, dropped

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to the floor as a sack of potatoes tumbles from a counter.

Norman shot as Reddin was falling, and Jeff pitched sidewise, clutching at his breast.

A moment's silence. Then a cool quiet voice from the doorway demanded—

"What's the matter here?"

"He killed Jeff Jones!" Toina screamed, accusingly.

Reddin, with lumbering effort and wheezing greatly, got from the floor and faced Renalds anxiously.

"Jeff he was on the war-path. Jeff he shot first, Mr. Renalds. He was a-layin' for Mr. Standish here. It was Jeff's fault! I tried to stop him—didn't I try to stop 'im, Mr. Standish?"

Renalds glanced about with sharp quickness from face to face; then asked of Norman—

"How was it?"

"He was after trouble. But first they all here wanted to make sure that I was alone—that *you* were not with me."

Renalds walked forward, looked down at the dead man, knew him, knew him for a 44 Circle man, one of Allister's men.

"What was Jeff doing here?" he demanded coldly, his dark face turned sternly on Reddin.

"I don't know, Mr. Renalds," Reddin wheezed. "I don't know. He rode in this afternoon!!"

"Oh what a lie!" screamed Toina, drunkenly reckless.

Reddin snarled silencingly at her, but she would not be silenced.

"He followed Pet Standish all the way from McCullough's to kill him!" she cried. "He knew Pet was comin' back here, so he waited. I wish to —— he'd got you!"

She shook her arm fiercely at Norman.

"I didn't know it!" Reddin shouted. "I didn't know it, Mr. Renalds. I'd run him out if I'd knowed it!"

"Pooh!" said the contemptuous Toina. "You big fat lummox, you wouldn't say boo to Jeff—an' you did know it! You heard Buck beg him not to kill this Pet—Buck wanted to do it himself——"

"You're drunk!" bawled Reddin. "Get out of here!"

"I know I'm drunk, but I won't get out! Jeff said he had to kill him—said it was orders!"

"Get out!" Reddin roared.

"Get out yourself if you don't like the way I talk. I'm goin' to show you up, you big lummox. Don't you touch me!"

"Get away from her, Reddin!" Norman said, stepping nearer.

"He knows just as well as I do," she screamed, "that Allister sent Jeff ——"

"It's a lie!" Reddin bellowed.

"—to kill this fellow! Jeff told him. I heard Jeff tell him!"

The drunken girl thrust out her hand accusingly at Reddin and looked with fierce expectancy toward the dark, silent Renalds. It was plainly visible on her haggard, distorted face that she waited for Renalds to shoot.

"Don't believe 'er!" shouted Reddin. "She's drunk! I tried to stop Jeff. Didn't I, Mr. Standish?"

"That's enough, Reddin," said Renalds.

"You're not goin' to shoot him?" Tonia cried. "You're a fine lot—all you! The kid here—" she waved an arm at Norman—"is the only one of you that's worth a ——! An' they'll get you, kid! Old Renalds has stole ever'thing off your ranch. Ever'body knows that. Reddin said so himself an' ——"

Reddin swung a thick arm, struck her in the face, knocked her down, and would have kicked her.

"Back—back from her!" Norman cried, springing forward, jerking and hitting Reddin.

Then Norman faced him:

"You leave the country, Reddin. You've been here long enough ——"

Reddin staggered back, angered and frightened. He looked anxiously toward Renalds, but nothing showed on that bearded face.

"—this country's filling up with decent people. Your day is done!"

As she struggled to her feet Toina laughed, shrill and derisively.

"Do I have to get out?" Reddin asked hoarsely, staring into Renalds' dark steady eyes.

"You do," he answered coldly.

From the low doorway of the passage that led past the dining room into the kitchen, Toina, with a hand to her bruised cheek, looked back and shrieked—

"Yah-ha-ha-ha-aa!"

TO BE CONTINUED

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The RESCUE VALIANT

BY THOMAS TOPHAM

Author of "One Young, One Widow, One Old."

THE snow was smooth, the dogs were good, the twilight was fair, and the sledge was swinging rapidly and recklessly down-hill, when Kyutinguah, an Eskimo hunter of renown, who was driving, saw something that interested him immensely. No man in Greenland could stop a dog-sledge so quickly as Kyutinguah, and with the simple-mindedness of an Eskimo, recking not of consequences, he stopped.

The sledge following him came on at full speed, smashed into his outfit and turned his sledge over and over. Packed meat, skins, camping equipment and fighting dogs entangled in harness, with snow flying in clouds, formed a picture of chaos rampant that could not have been duplicated north of 65°.

"Sufferin' cats," yelled the white man, who should have been driving the second team, but who had dropped asleep on his sledge and was rudely awakened in the midst of the turmoil, "don't you know enough to keep on goin' or slow down easier?"

He burst into a roar of profanity directed at the Eskimo, then realized that his companion could not understand English. His succeeding remarks in Eskimo were pointed but not so severe, for his command of the Northern language was not complete.

Both men plunged into the writhing mass and with blows, kicks and curses untangled the dogs, most of which had desisted from fighting and were tearing ferociously at the meat packs.

When peace had been restored and there remained only the labor of repacking the sledges, Kyutinguah called the white man. Walking back a little distance he pointed at the snow.

"That is why I stopped," he explained.

The white man gazed at two broad sledge marks, with the imprint of dogs' feet showing that the sledge had been moving north.

"Well," said the white man in Eskimo, "I see nothing to get excited about. Just another bunch out hunting. I'm glad they got up enough courage to try it."

"It is a *komatik* from the South," replied Kyutinguah. "See the wide runners and of steel, not walrus tusks. Ours are narrower, this much." He drew a mark in the snow that indicated the difference.

"Friends, perhaps. Sneaking enemies more likely, seeking to rob us of that little food we possess."

Mr. Timmons, the white man, regarded the sledge tracks dubiously. He had no particular reason to fear enemies, feeling that he could take care of himself. But even if they were friendly people he had no liking for additional mouths to feed.

That was the terrible thing, more mouths to feed up there in the pitiless North, and he had enough mouths to feed now. Mr. Timmons, capable, hardy and resourceful, was mate of the trading ship *Annie Ross*, which, through the ignorance of the captain

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had been ice-bound on the bleak Greenland coast near an Eskimo settlement.

The mate had been in the Arctic before and his knowledge of the Eskimo language proved invaluable, for upon him had suddenly developed the duty of keeping the crew alive through the long Northern night. His skipper, Captain Eph Ross, had sunk under the oppression of the "Great Dark" and spent his time lying beside a red-hot stove. Mr. Timmons, perceiving the danger of starvation had, with characteristic energy, moved from the ship to the Eskimo settlement and had allied himself with the natives to hunt food.

The white man, being in doubt, reached inside his hood and rubbed his left ear, which had been frozen and itched. He bent down and examined the sledge tracks with a critical eye.

"I do not think they are enemies," he assured Kyutinguah, but nevertheless, while the Eskimo repacked the overturned sledges, he walked back for a mile, examining the snow carefully.

He was rewarded by finding moccasin marks where the traveling was rough and some one had got out to walk. Whoever the stranger was, he was not an Eskimo. The white man could see that at a glance. The track marks were wide apart, showing that he was large. The mate, measuring them by stepping from one to another, had to stretch to keep in the footprints.

A little disturbed but not over-anxious, Mr. Timmons rejoined his Eskimo companion. They followed the new sledge tracks, Kyutinguah excited and fearful, the white man cautious. Both unslung their rifles because it was not improbable that they were on the trail of marauders, who were not unknown.

The wide sledge marks were not hard to follow, even in the twilight of the oncoming Spring. Suddenly as they topped a ridge of snow and dashed down, they were full upon the strange sledge. It had stopped, apparently at sound of their coming. A huge man stood beside his wide-runner *komatik*, rifle in hand but undisturbed. His Norse face was impassive but plainly bore a question mark.

Mr. Timmons opened in Eskimo.

"Greetings to the man of the South," he said. "You are a friend, we hope."

"A friend," replied the huge Northlander. "I am the trader, Jorgen Nielsen."

"How funny," gurgled a feminine voice in English from the *komatik*, "that two white men should meet up here and talk in Eskimo."

Mr. Timmons shot a quick, surprized glance at the *komatik*, from beneath the furs of which a young woman was emerging. He was totally dazed at the sight. The young woman looked at him quizzically and somewhat impudently from above a collar-piece of wolverine, the most highly prized fur of the North. Mr. Timmons continued to stare in blank amazement.

"Do you by any chance talk English or Danish—or only Eskimo?" she asked in English.

Mr. Timmons had small place in his scheme of things for women. Like the Eskimos he regarded them as necessary evils in an otherwise passable world. He shut his astonished mouth with a snap and opened it again to remark brusquely—

"I talk lots of English an' a little Danish an' considerable Eskimo."

The mate, long accustomed to seeing only Eskimo women or the wife of his skipper, Captain Ross, had a perfect right to be amazed and dazzled at the young woman. She was a vision that would make a snow-blinded man open his eyes. He turned inquiringly to the trader.

"My daughter, Dorthe," said the trader gravely.

The girl jumped lightly into the snow, her handsomely embroidered moccasins giving the mate another shock. He took in her garb, trousers of seal-skin, jacket of blue fox, gaily colored cape and sash, and wolverine collar. The gorgeous vision advanced to him, extending a gloved hand.

"You are the mate of the ice-bound ship? We have heard so much about you," she cried, her round, rather pretty face beaming.

Mr. Timmons retreated a step in confusion, remembered his manners, and shook hands as well as he could with a greasy and blood-stained glove.

"Yuh, I'm the mate," he mumbled. "Timmons is my name."

The trader began speaking and Mr. Timmons withdrew his fascinated gaze from the gorgeous spectacle.

"Yes, we have heard considerable about your ship from stray Eskimos," the trader said, "and we decided that a little expedition to investigate would relieve the monotony of the Winter. We trust every one is

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well. We are also in hopes of trading for some ivory and blue fox, which we heard the Eskimos have caught in abundance."

"Come along to the ship," invited Mr. Timmons. "We can put you up."

He knew that Captain Eph would rave but he coundn't help it. Mr. Timmons' eyes involuntarily followed the girl as her father tucked her in his *komatik*, then he went back to the business in hand of beating his dogs into a state of order again.

THE visitors settled themselves happily on the ship. The girl was buoyantly vivacious. Her existence in the North at the lonely trading-post was monotonous in the extreme. Here was life, a ship full of white people, Eskimos to fill in. She unpacked a small phonograph and three records and the ship resounded to "Il Trovatore," a trombone jazz from New York and a baritone solo, while half-frozen sailors crowded around. She was naïvely disappointed when she found that Mr. Timmons, the hero of many a story told her by Eskimos, was staying at the settlement.

Mr. Timmons assisted in installing the guests, then somewhat wistfully boarded his sledge and departed with Kyutinguah. The frivolous life was enticing for once, but there was work to do. The meat they had got on the hunt must be unpacked and divided, dogs must be cared for, other hunts arranged. Stern duty called and he was not the man to miss the call—not when his eating depended upon it.

The mate rode on his sledge until he had rounded a hummock of snow that hid the ship from his sight, when his emotions got the better of him. He stopped his dogs and sat pensively on the sledge, gazing over the snow. Profound melancholy seized him such as he had never known before.

Kyutinguah sailed ahead but soon discovered that his companion was not following, and fearing an accident, turned hastily and came back. Mr. Timmons continued to sit.

"Thou art stuck in the snow?" asked Kyutinguah, puzzled.

Mr. Timmons came back to earth with a thud, resentful at having his dreams so rudely interrupted. He hopped out of the sledge.

"——," yelled Mr. Timmons in English, but he unconsciously relapsed into Eskimo as the astonished native looked at him uncomprehendingly. "Here I have gone all over the world and have seen women by the score and never a one like her. She's a—a—baby seal," he ended lamely.

He had intended to say peach, but there was no Eskimo equivalent. Kyutinguah seemed very little impressed, gazing stolidly at his friend.

"I said she's a—a—baby seal," roared Mr. Timmons. "I'll get her too."

He shook a gloved fist in Kyutinguah's face, and feeling better after relieving his feelings, he turned and started up to his dogs to untangle the traces, muttering in English.

To Kyutinguah there was only one explanation as to Mr. Timmons' peculiar behavior. He was convinced that the mate had gone *problokto*. The Northern madness that strikes Eskimos and white men alike had finally got his valued friend. The Eskimo expected in another moment to see Mr. Timmons running wildly over the snow, tearing off his clothes.

As Mr. Timmons turned his back the Eskimo reached swiftly down to his own sledge, drew out an iron bar much prized for its effect on dogs, and in all friendliness whanged the mate across the head. Mr. Timmons dropped into the snow.

Kyutinguah rapidly cut loose Mr. Timmons' dogs, attached them all to his sledge, piled Mr. Timmons on the pack and drove into the Eskimo settlement, not far away, with a wild whoop.

The mate awakened a half-hour later in his own hut with a splitting headache and no comprehension at all as to what had happened.

Kyutinguah, who had remained faithfully at his side, explained that he had gone *problokto*. Mr. Timmons, remembering his foolish remark to the Eskimo in the first flush of his discovery that he had fallen in love, wondered if he had. Later when he found a large bump on his head he entertained grave suspicions as to his Eskimo friend's explanation.

Wild rumors soon reached the ice-bound ship of Mr. Timmons' plight, much wilder than the facts warranted, for Eskimos are given to innocent exaggeration.

"I knew it. I knew it," groaned Captain Eph Ross helplessly, when news was taken to him that Mr. Timmons was dying, probably already dead, and if not dead crazy with the dreaded Northern madness. "This

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country ain't fit for no white man, an' me left up here to git the ship out alone. It can't be did."

Showing more energy than usual with him, he deserted his red-hot stove, bundled himself up in all the clothes that he could find, and prepared to go after his mate's remains.

"I'm going with you," cried Dorthe, shocked profoundly at the news. "Oh, it can't be true. He's so brave and splendid, and I've heard so much of him and his tremendous work to carry you through the Winter."

Mr. Timmons, having found that his head ached badly, had attempted to go to sleep and wear it off. He was just in a comfortable doze when he felt a cold hand on his forehead and heard a feminine voice—

"Oh, Captain, do you think he's dying?"

He opened his eyes and looked directly into a pair of blue eyes bent anxiously upon him. For one moment he gazed deliriously into the fascinating eyes, then startled, he sat bolt upright.

"Holy mackerel, no!" he almost roared. "I ain't dyin'. I ain't even hurt."

Miss Nielsen fell back hastily to the wall of the small hut, somewhat alarmed, but relief showed in her face.

"What do these Eskimos mean, anyway, spreadin' sech reports," complained Captain Eph, forgetting his anxiety in his grievance that he had been forced uselessly out into the cold. "Here I come all this way thinkin' you was kilt or crazy or something an' find you O.K."

The girl flashed a look of scorn at Captain Eph.

"At least, Mr. Timmons," she interposed, "we are all immensely relieved that the reports are false."

The mate arose and rubbed his head.

"I think," he said, "that I must have fell and bumped my head. Leastwise, I'm all right now."

"Anyhow, you'll be all right tomorrow?" asked Dorthe.

"Tomorrow? Sure. Why tomorrow?"

"Oh Mr. Timmons," said the girl anxiously. "Father and I are to be hosts at a dinner on the ship tomorrow and will you come? There will be seal-flippers and flapjacks, real ones, and honest-to-goodness currant biscuits and raisin pemmican, and three bottles of champagne. Think of it, three bottles that we brought along!"

Would Mr. Timmons be there? Polar bears and walruses could not have kept him away. He would have gone had the fare been snowballs and chipped ice and he had been compelled to wear a Palm Beach suit. He stuttered an acceptance and aided Captain Ross through the tunnel that protected his hut, for Captain Eph persisted in donning so many clothes that negotiating tunnels was one of his greatest agonies and a trial of temper for all who were with him.

Mr. Timmons' heart, which he had hitherto been unaware existed, gave a mighty thump as Dorthe waved him a gay farewell.

The hard-hit mate gave much anxious thought to his attire for dinner on the ship. His present outfit suited not at all. It was greasy and dirty and sad to say, somewhat lousy. Mr. Timmons laboriously melted snow and washed his feet. He put on a new pair of bear-skin trousers that he had been saving for use when the thaw started. An old khaki shirt and a necktie of ancient date added a picturesque touch which went well with a mackinaw coat that he dug from his box. He even chanced boots, risking frozen toes for style. Over all he wore a bear-skin overcoat. His mop of sandy hair he slicked down with seal fat and he was ready for dinner.

So busy was Mr. Timmons with his thoughts as he left the Eskimo settlement for the ship that he failed to see an Eskimo regarding him jealously as he swung off. Arrutsak, lurking near a hut, knew where Mr. Timmons was going and his fierce heart beat angrily. From the moment he had set eyes on Dorthe Nielsen, Arrutsak had decided that she would look well in his hut. He, Arrutsak, had a powerfully persuading way with women he fancied. He took them. But here this husky mate seemed to stand in the way. He slunk off with schemes of removing the mate from the Northland surging through his head and Mr. Timmons went happily on his way.

IT WAS a roaring, jolly dinner such as can only be had under the Aurora Borealis. Mr. Timmons, through expert maneuvering on the part of the girl, sat next his Northern goddess. Dorthe told him of her schooldays in New York and Mr. Timmons, after considerable urging, diffidently related a tale of a bear hunt.

"Oh, wonderful," declared Dorthe. "I've

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never been on a bear hunt, Mr. Timmons. Oh, the thrill that must come with killing a monstrous polar bear!"

With a start of surprize and joy Mr. Timmons discovered a bold idea percolating through his brain. Bear tracks had been seen a few miles north of the settlement. True, the bear had probably gone by this time for two hunts had failed to find him, but it would be an excuse, at least, to get a few hours alone with the girl. He acted promptly and extended an invitation awkwardly. Dorthe smiled and accepted.

It was a jaunty little party they formed the next day with Dorthe on a sledge and Mr. Timmons at the whip. As they waited at the settlement while Mr. Timmons went after his rifle, which he had almost forgotten in his excitement, Arrutsak slid up to the white girl.

"You are showing signs of *problokto* to go with him," he said in Eskimo. He slapped himself across the chest. "I am a bear hunter. I could kill thee a bear—a real bear. I am Arrutsak, the bear hunter."

"Waddle thy fat way back to thy hut and crawl in with the women," replied the girl in Eskimo, looking the greasy, dirty native over scornfully, "before I call the white man to tear thy heart out and eat it."

She was furious at the effrontery of Arrutsak. The offer of the Eskimo to kill a bear for her was as point-blank an offer of marriage as he could make, and the white girl knew it.

Arrutsak sneered villainously and turned on his heel as Mr. Timmons came running with his gun. The mate scowled after the Eskimo, suspecting that he had been attempting to steal something from the sledge, but his good humor returned as they dashed away.

The mate hunted the bear perfunctorily for several hours, rehearsing in his mind what he would say when they were eating lunch and he had the chance to talk. He planned carefully.

"Dorthe," he expected to say boldly, almost commandingly. "I've looked all over the world for a girl like you. Will you marry me?" Just like that. Quick and to the point. That was the kind of man he was.

The bear, being apparently non-existent, Mr. Timmons staked the dogs to an iron rod driven in the ice a short distance away and prepared luncheon. He thawed blubber by chewing it after the manner of the Eskimos, heated coffee and they ate their frozen lunch. Then they sat cosily on the sledge and chatted. It was a happy little picnic in the North.

"Dorthe," began Mr. Timmons, swallowing a large lump in his throat. "Dorthe, I've looked all over ——"

A terrific clatter from the dogs interrupted him. The disgusted Mr. Timmons took an iron club from the sledge and hurled it at them. For a few moments they stopped.

"Dorthe," said Mr. Timmons again.

"Yes?" whispered Dorthe expectantly.

"I've looked all over the world—Gosh-almighty, jump!"

Mr. Timmons had looked directly into the face of a large polar bear, that slipping upon them, had been so sure of his prey he had emitted a triumphant hissing sound like an angry goose.

The girl obeyed Mr. Timmons' command with incredible quickness. She leaped and ran. The mate, being on the side nearest the bear, had no chance to jump. With great presence of mind he threw up his legs and turned a somersault across the sledge, landing head-first in the snow on the other side. The beast started across the sledge when Dorthe, perceiving the dangerous position of her escort, ran to his assistance. She grasped one of the wildly waving legs of Mr. Timmons and with a yank dragged him out of immediate danger.

The dogs, staked tightly, were now making a terrific uproar, to which Mr. Timmons added a wild howl of rage as he hopped to his feet. His attention distracted by these noises, the bear paused to consider the situation, when the inviting odors of the sledge proved overpowering. Mr. Timmons and the dogs could wait. He explored the sledge thoroughly, tearing and ripping skins and eating the food daintly between his paws.

The angry mate and the girl were constrained to stand off and watch.

"I might 'a' knowed the brute was around when them dogs first started yelpin'," Mr. Timmons bitterly reproached himself. He commenced a startling series of imprecations, directed mainly at his own chuckleheadedness.

"Stop, Mr. Timmons," ordered Dorthe,

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and Mr. Timmons, remembering that he was not with a party of Eskimos, halted embarrassed.

He started toward the dogs to release them but the bear started too. The bear blocked both dogs and gun. The mate danced frantically and shook his fists. He reached for his knife, but this he had removed to prepare the food and had left it on the sledge. Dorthe took his arm.

"Come on back to the settlement," she urged, "and get help. Even you can't fight a bear with your fists."

Disgustedly, hopelessly, Mr. Timmons turned with the girl. They plodded silently back to the settlement, from where Mr. Timmons sent out Eskimos to get bear, dogs, sledge and gun, after which he took the girl to the ship. He had plenty of time then to finish his interrupted sentence, but he instinctively felt that it was a poor time to propose to a girl just after she had seen him routed by a bear. So he left her at the ship and then retired to the seclusion of his hut where he could curse audibly and plentifully.

He had bungled fearfully and yet he wanted the girl more and more. His failure sent a cold rage through him. She had seemed so near when she had whispered, "Yes."

Five minutes more, three, two, only one minute more he had needed. He crawled into his sleeping-bag and stared up through the cold darkness of his hut, vowing eternal vengeance against polar bears—all bears. He was going to wipe out the breed completely in the North.

The unhappy man arose after a broken sleep, determined that he would settle the matter at once. He was consumed by a restlessness that drove him to action. He brewed himself a pot of tea, but he could not eat, which made him think that he was ill. The medicine was all at the ship. He must have medicine, so with that as an excuse, he made for the ship.

Life on the vessel was going on as usual. Mr. Timmons took a dose of calomel and a swig of tonic that the skipper recommended highly, then asked for Dorthe.

"Oh," said the skipper, "she jest took a little walk on the ice. That girl's sick. Said she needed fresh air. Ugh!"

He shivered as he thought of the awful fresh air around forty below zero and pulled closer to the hot stove.

The mate hoped desperately that fate was kind and that the girl was alone, but she wasn't. Her father and a sailor were trailing along. Dorthe greeted him cheerily and she smiled when she thought of the interrupted speech of the day before. It was provoking. Had Mr. Timmons intended to propose? She regarded him with a speculative eye and he looked like a man to her—a real man.

Mr. Timmons stalked along moodily, thinking so hard that it hurt. It was difficult to make conversation.

"It's getting lighter every day," volunteered Dorthe.

"Yuh, you can soon see the sun," said Mr. Timmons absently.

"Oh, it's wonderful when the sun comes back," cried Dorthe radiantly.

"Yes?" replied Mr. Timmons, his mind still busy on his problem of devising a way to get Dorthe alone. Then he had it, a plan so simple that it dazzled him.

"You could see the sun by goin' to the top of that glacier," said Mr. Timmons, pointing with a hand that trembled with excitement.

"Oh, wouldn't it be grand to see it?" cried Dorthe. "Are you going?"

"If you will go," declared the mate boldly. "Jest us two."

"Of course I'll go," agreed Dorthe. "Just us two."

SHE watched the mate admiringly as he swaggered away to get his snow-shoes. All Winter long she had been hearing stories of this man carried South by strolling Eskimos. Unused to white men other than her father, he seemed a heroic figure to her vivid imagination; uncouth perhaps, but a doer of deeds by land and sea, unafraid, stout-hearted.

Spring was coming in the Northland. Mr. Timmons could feel it, the girl talked about it as they set off on snow-shoes to reach the ice cliff and see the sun. There was joy in the air, the snow crackled with a sharpness Mr. Timmons had never heard before. The icy breeze that fanned his cheek was zephyrlike in its softness. The peculiar light that glows as the sun is coming back covered all with a romantic glory. And beside him, gracefully sliding along on snow-shoes, was the most glorious creature that Mr. Timmons had ever seen. His

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heart came into his mouth as he thought again of what he had planned to do.

He intended looking at the sun as he had promised and after that he was going to speak boldly. He rehearsed again the speech he had started when a bear had interrupted him. It sounded good.

Again Arrutsak watched jealously as they swung happily through the settlement, and his beady, wicked eyes swept avidly over the young woman.

They reached the ice cliff easily. There they swung snow-shoes about their necks and started up. The girl was a nimble climber, almost Eskimo-like in her ability. Mr. Timmons was slower and Dorthe gaily helped him.

They attained the top. On one side the cliff fell sheer for many feet. On the other a smooth, icy, glassy hill rose steeply where the wind-swept snow had banked for months.

It was glorious there on the top. The girl stood transfixed as she looked at the sun, just peeping up. Behind them towered ice-capped mountains. At sea they could dimly make out the ice-bound vessel, rigging sagging with ice, while back of it towered a gigantic iceberg, both a menace and a protection. Even Mr. Timmons was moved. The girl looked around at him in awe.

"Isn't it—wonderful?" she whispered.

Mr. Timmons, with other and more wonderful visions, swept an unseeing and fast glazing eye over the magnificent, tremendous scenery. He decided that his time had come.

"Yes," he said huskily.

He stepped around to confront her.

"Dorthe, I've looked all over the world for a girl— Good Gosh!" he ended in a roar as he slipped, hopped on one foot and sat down heavily.

He began slipping toward the smooth, glassy hill, clawing frantically.

Dorthe made a desperate effort to stop him, grabbed at his shoulder, but only succeeded in giving him a push and hastening his descent.

"Help!" shrieked the girl.

"Help, my eye," bawled Mr. Timmons, and went on his way, spinning grotesquely as he futilely attempted to claw his gloved hands or dig his heels into the hard surface. In the half-light he was soon out of sight.

Dorthe, at the first word Mr. Timmons had uttered on the cliff, had seen it written all over his rugged face that he intended to propose. Though this was not unexpected, it had flustered her. The suddenness of his exit from the scene in the midst of his proposal had added bewilderment, but she did not remain bewildered long. She strapped on her snow-shoes. It was desperate business, but she was used to skiing and the prospect did not daunt her. Within two minutes after Mr. Timmons had disappeared the girl started down the hill. Only an expert could have done it, but Dorthe was an expert.

The girl had need of all her skill before she reached the bottom. There she found Mr. Timmons, bloody and unconscious, half-buried in snow and ice.

There was only one thing to do—get the mate back to the settlement or the ship. He would freeze to death if she left and went for help. The girl cut the straps from Mr. Timmons' snow-shoes and strapped his shirt tightly around his middle. She wound her own wolverine fur about his face. Grasping the hood attached to his shirt she set off, dragging Mr. Timmons. It was a desperate chance and it was hard on Mr. Timmons' anatomy, but she won. Mr. Timmons was alive when she reached the ship.

Dorthe called help and they put Mr. Timmons to bed on the vessel. He was a sick man. His collar-bone was broken, he was covered with bruises and cuts, his chin was frozen where he had slobbered on it while unconscious. To add to his discomfort there was an irritating frost-bite about his middle, where his shirt had parted company with his *nannookers* under stress of the pulling—but that was the least of his troubles.

Mr. Timmons was deeply, terribly chagrined by the accident. The bear was bad enough, but this was unutterably worse.

"Oh, if I had only tied the skin of a seal palate to my feet I wouldn't have slipped," he cried over and over in the bitterness of his soul, and fell into a raging fever that was alarming.

Nielsen, the trader, had been preparing to move back to the South. Dorthe stopped him.

"Not until we find out how Mr. Timmons is getting along," she declared stoutly, and her father gave in.

Dorthe wandered about disconsolately. She had struck up a friendship with an old

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Eskimo crone at the settlement, who told her stories, quaint, gruesome, humorous and sometimes startlingly frank of the people of the North, their fierce loves and deadly hates and childish beliefs.

Thither Dorthe wandered for consolation. The old woman, naked, sat in a hut. She greeted Dorthe with a withered, toothless grin.

"Mother," said Dorthe, "I am afraid that the brave white man will die. He is very ill."

"The 'Brave One' will not die," the old woman assured her. She took down the girl's hair, scratched her head soothingly. "He is too brave to die when thou art waiting for him."

Dorthe sighed, then laughed uneasily.

"One of your men offered to kill me a bear," she confided to the woman.

"I know, I know," said the old woman. "I saw him. It was Arrutsak, the woman fighter, who rows a *kaiak* not of his own catch—when the sea is gentle." She broke into a tirade against Arrutsak. "Such a strong, bold man is he," she raved. "It was he who urged that I be placed naked in a snow hut that I might die, because he thought I had put a spell on the animals to make them invisible."

So she whispered stories of Arrutsak's knavery and then told the tale of the man who, "once upon a time," turned into a duck and flew away and came back to find his faithful wife waiting—

"Waiting as thou art waiting——"

She glanced suddenly at the tunnel entrance as a shuffling sound grew in volume. Dorthe followed the gaze. The evil, but barbarically handsome, face of Arrutsak poked into the hut.

"Out, dog," shrilled the old woman. "Kyutinguah will chop thee limb from limb."

"Kyutinguah?" sneered Arrutsak. "He is hunting with the others."

He struck the old crone a blow over her bald head with the handle of his hunting-knife that felled her.

Dorthe leaped to her feet, but Arrutsak was quicker. With a bound he grasped her, thrust a dirty piece of seal-skin in her mouth, threw her to the floor and kneeling on her, secured the gag despite her struggles. Then he tied her feet and hands and wrapped her in a bear-skin robe.

Arrutsak dragged the girl after him like a sack out of the tunnel and lashed her to a sledge. With a slap of his thigh to the dogs he was gone into the vast, white wilderness.

The Eskimo and his captive were far away when the old woman groaned, rolled over, gazed vacantly around the gloomy interior of the hut, and came to a sudden realization of what had happened.

Arrutsak was, as she had told Dorthe, no friend of hers. He had more than once openly urged putting the old woman to death to save food. Besides, he had a very brutal way with women, was notorious for it. The men of the settlement were hunting. Women there were, but they were useless. There was one man and one only who was brave and strong enough to rescue the girl, Mr. Timmons, the Brave One, and he was ill at the ship. But it was rightfully his job.

The woman staggered to her feet, flung on clothes hastily, the first things at hand, and started for the ship. Her trip, through the bitter cold and snow, half-clothed, dazed, was worthy an epic of the North. Half delirious she reached her destination and called loudly for the Brave One.

Capt. Eph Ross did not want to disturb Mr. Timmons, but he could not understand Eskimo. Nielsen was out with a sailor on a little expedition of his own. He took the woman to Mr. Timmons.

The old woman poured forth a volley of language. The mate did not appear interested at first, but he suddenly sat up with a yell, stopped the woman and made her talk slower. He began dressing as she talked.

"Mother," asked Mr. Timmons, "where would Arrutsak go? Where could he go?"

"One place and one only, where all renegades go. To the big caves beyond the great ice river. Three sleeps it is, three long sleeps. There he will find others of his kind."

MR. TIMMONS had heard of the caves, knew about where they were. Taking only his rifle, a field-glass, snow-shoes and a sack of food, he set off on his perilous mission. Everything depended upon fast traveling. Dogs and a sledge would hamper him because of much rough snow and ice to cross.

In a dazed rage and thirsting for the chance to kill Arrutsak, Mr. Timmons took the trail of the Eskimo. It was plainly marked and the mate came as near a

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prayer as he could that the weather would stay clear and the wind gentle for a few hours.

He started forth a sick man, but the mists cleared from his brain and strength came back to his limbs as he strode onward. Only one thought possessed him—to kill Arrutsak. He was going to slay the Eskimo in his tracks when he found him, and find him he would.

The mate went swiftly over the good snow, then struggled painfully as he struck great ridges and broken, icy lumps, but he gloated over the rough going. It meant that the Eskimo with his sledge and a girl he dared not take his eyes off, would slow down. Here and there he picked up the trail. At a stretch of good snow again he shouted with triumph as he noted that the sledge had broken a runner and had been hastily mended with thong. This he knew would keep wearing off and cause frequent stops, if not a complete breakdown.

Mr. Timmons struggled on. His broken collar-bone gave him pain, the cold irritated the cuts on his face and the fever still burned him until he was almost persuaded to throw away some of his clothes.

Complete darkness fell, and the lone traveler was forced to halt. Traveling over the snow and broken ice in the dark was certain to result in disaster, following the trail was an impossibility. He was consoled with the thought that Arrutsak too, with dogs and a sledge, would be compelled to stop.

Hours of mental and physical agony followed. Mr. Timmons found a sheltered spot in the lee of a snow-drift, where he curled up like an Eskimo. He slept fitfully and in the waking intervals he thought of Dorthe and how much he wanted her, of his opportunities to tell her how he loved her and the miserable failures he had made. Miserable failures they were in truth, he admitted, grinding his teeth. Twice when he was hoping to appear at his best humiliating accidents had occurred and on both occasions she had dragged him from the jaws of death.

Bitter regrets swept his soul, followed by shaking fits of anger at the renegade Eskimo. There would be no more regrets once he found Dorthe, he told the cold stars. He would rescue her, take her direct to Captain Eph Ross and make the skipper marry them.

A heroic thrill shot through the cold and miserable mate. Rescue! He said the word aloud, breaking the deadly silence of the frozen wastes. There in the cold and the darkness and the loneliness he planned the rescue, a valiant, heroic rescue worthy of the girl; planned how the meeting should be when he overtook Arrutsak.

Arrutsak would fight, of that he had no doubt. The Eskimo would fight because he would be like an animal at bay with no hope except in fighting. He, Mr. Timmons, would hurl bitter defiance into the brawny Northlander's teeth, sing him an insult-song such as no Eskimo had ever heard before, close with him and slay him. Then with his foot on his foe's body, Dorthe would throw herself into his arms and sobbingly weep out her love.

Exhausted he fell into a deeper sleep than he had expected and when he opened his eyes it was light enough to travel. Hastily he munched at a piece of frozen walrus and started around the snow-drift to pick up the sledge trail when lo! he heard, clear and sharp, a voice.

"Up dog! Up! Up!" commanded the voice, and the crack of a whip resounded like a shot.

Mr. Timmons stood stock-still in the snow, his mouth negligently and dangerously open, exposing his teeth and tongue to freezing. Then jaw knotted grimly, his shoulders squared but with considerable misgivings as to this heroic rescue business he had so fondly planned, he slid forward and beheld as strange a sight as the Arctic had ever presented.

A dejected Eskimo was dragging a sledge on which stood a girl of the North, a glorious girl, holding to the uprights of the sledge with one hand while she cracked a whip with the other and curled it cunningly—now around the Eskimo's legs, then his shoulders.

"Ah-ah, dog!" the girl cried in Eskimo before she had seen the valiant rescuer, "it is not far to the settlement, and my loved Brave One will cut out thy heart when he sees thee. He would eat it if thou wert a brave man, but the heart of a coward he would never eat. He will throw it to the dogs——"

She looked up from the business of nicking the Eskimo expertly with the whip.

"Oh," she cried in confusion, as she caught sight of Mr. Timmons in the twilight.

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"Ah," said Mr. Timmons, reaching to unsling his rifle to kill the Eskimo.

Arrutsak dropped the traces and groveled at Mr. Timmons' feet in the snow.

"Save me from this terrible woman," he appealed wildly. "Save me! I will serve thee for life. She released the dogs while I was preparing camp and she stole my gun. Then she beat me shamefully and she hitched me to the *komatik* and she has whipped me every step while I was faithfully dragging her home. She is a soul-stealer, the spirit of my uncle, the East Greenlander whom I killed, come back——"

Mr. Timmons looked down in utter disgust and surprize at the Eskimo. His dreams of rescue went smashing and crashing. He had come on rescue bent, to win the love of the fair Dorthe, and here he was standing like a simple fool, unneeded. He couldn't put his foot on this groveling beast and proclaim himself a conqueror.

Mr Timmons felt that he had been grievously, outrageously swindled. With rage welling in his heart he swung his foot and gave the Eskimo a mighty kick in the ribs.

"Ugh!" grunted Mr. Timmons with agony, as his frosted toes, with only a moccasin for protection, came into collision with the hardy Eskimo, and he sat down suddenly in the snow, grabbing for his foot.

Tears of rage, pain, weakness and humiliation came, unbidden.

"I might 'a' knowed better'n to kick a Eskimo," he almost sobbed.

Dorthe bounded to his side.

"Oh, you poor man," she cried, and she patted and rubbed the hurt foot. "Brave One, you came all this way to help me, to rescue me?"

Mr. Timmons gulped, clasped his foot tightly in both hands as if for succor, and looked up bravely at the girl.

"Dorthe, I've looked all over——"

He halted weakly, gulped again. A wave of illness swept over him; the snow, the girl, everything seemed in a whirl.

"—the world?" suggested Dorthe innocently.

"—for a girl like you. Will you marry me?" finished Mr. Timmons in a thin, weak, unnatural voice.

"You bet," he heard dimly as if she were far away.

Then he accepted her assistance to arise so that she could weep on his manly shoulder.

Slants on LIFE

by Bill Adams

Primal Impulses

THIS is the sort of day when a ship smells of the sea long before she even gets out of the dock, or anywhere near to the river-mouth. It's high, windy, showery and clear. It's cold, and brisk, and I would like to throw the gaskets off the topsails, a boy again, and bound along the road to Anywhere. It's the kind of day when you can hear the skipper and the mate upon the poop, quite clearly from amidships, discussing what color to paint the rails. It's the sort of day when you've *got* to go; the day when nothing satisfies you at all; when you feel cold yet do not want to feel any other way; when you sense the first wind that set the whole wide universe in motion and wish that you'd been there to see.

It's the sort of day when you wish the world would end, in a mighty howling hurricane, with trees and people, churches and whole city blocks, herds of cattle and upflung rivers, hurtled through space.

It's the kind of day on which my great-great-great-grandfather ten thousand times removed sat at his cave door in the evening and roared delight at the rainbow in the sunset sky and then went into the cave and bade his woman take the baby, while he took the elder child, that the two of them might, with the children clinging to their hairy necks, run to the swollen river, and leap in; to swim on and on and on all through the half-dark night until they came ashore on some low beach far down the stream and, climbing out again, might make for themselves another home, and start new hunting-trails.

It's a queer day—an April day—and Spring is grumbling in my pulses.

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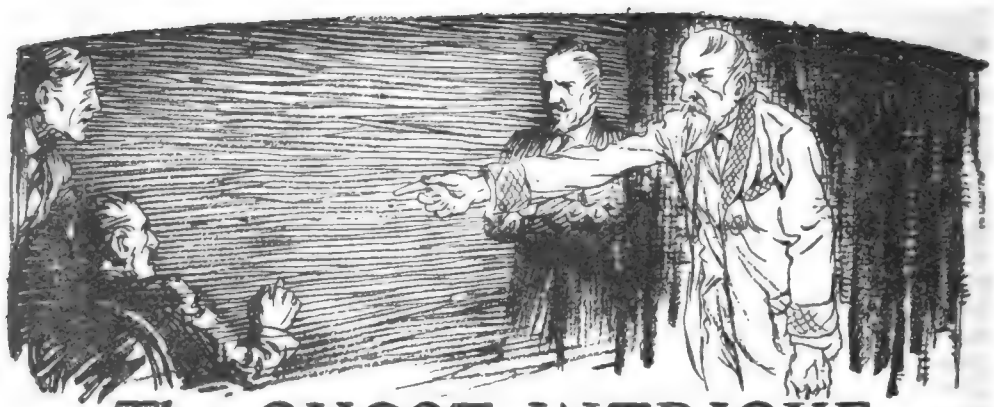

The GHOST INTRIGUE

BY CONROY KRODER

STITT found that hiding in one disused room twenty-three and three-quarters hours out of the twenty-four—except for the time that he played the spy or was driven by alarms to hang cocooned from the ceiling below—was a very disagreeable job. Especially when he permitted himself to think how every instant was filled with danger.

At any moment he might be discovered; worse, at any moment he might learn too late that he had been discovered days before. At any moment, that is, he might be struck by one of those amazing retaliations with which the Hachey brothers, masters of crooks and kings of parasites that they were, were wont to eliminate those who interfered with them.

And certainly, if that happened, they would find him in a most defenseless position.

They would find him alone, a secret intruder in another man's home, a trickster and faker and companion of fakers, playing upon the credulity of age. Why, he himself would have despised himself if the visible facts were all the truth. Even as it was, he had hated the part he had played, cozening old man Brandage, working upon the one great affection of his life, pretending—by all the powers of superstition!—pretending to be the spirit of the old man's son, dead these seven years.

Even as it was, he had hated it, though one effect of the deception should be to save the old man from the consequences of his mistakes. Or, more bluntly, of his crimes.

After a week, Stitt was glad that it was all over. The seances got on his nerves, the prowling and eavesdropping about the house with always the chance of a bullet, and the never-ending country stillness. That stillness was all about him now, save for the sentinel whispering of the trees that crowned the two hills in the hollow of which stood the old Brandage house. Sebastopol was only half a mile away, San Francisco only two hours by rail; but this craggy farm, to which the once great Brandage holding had shrunk, was solitary enough to fit its present purpose well.

During the daytime, a faint greenish light came through the closed blinds of the room in which Stitt lay hidden. With the evening, came pitch dark. It seemed to Stitt that it had been dark for hours, but a glance at his radium-numeraled watch told him that it was only half-past seven. He stirred restlessly, wishing for midnight, when he had planned to leave.

Only a faint rustling betrayed his careful movement. It was the rustling of papers in a pocket inside his shirt. These papers were the result of his week's work. Some contained memoranda of things Stitt had overheard; some Stitt had stolen from old man Brandage's safe, from his writing-desk, and from a secret cache in the hills. These latter were the most valuable. They should be worth some thousands to Stitt, while there were others who might appraise them cheap at—say, four men's lives!

Stitt settled down again, then suddenly—*clump*, *clump*, *clump*—he heard old man Brandage coming up the stairs. It was John Brandage's regular habit to go to his

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room and change to smoking-jacket and slippers after dinner, yet Stitt was instantly on his feet and stealing across to the door. He had learned in his life that nothing is certain but uncertainty, and that a little more knowledge is always a desirable thing.

The door opened noiselessly inward—hinges and knob were well oiled—and to the narrow crack Stitt applied an eye. From the hall below the light of an electric globe streamed up the stairs and dimly along the corridor. Across the corridor, vaguely outlined, was the door to old man Brandage's room.

With the opening of the door, the smell of cooked food came to Stitt, also a faint clatter of dishes, and the fainter but unmistakable sound of some one splashing in a bath-tub. That sound, Stitt knew, must be made by Rufus Brandage. Besides Stitt himself there were only the housekeeper and John Brandage himself and his nephew Rufus inside the house.

It was characteristic of Stitt that he wondered even then if there might be some meaning for him in this, that he remembered that the after-dinner hour is not a popular time for bathing.

Creak, creak, creak—went the stairs under old John Brandage's weight. Stitt, listening, felt a peculiar wave of pity and friendliness for him. Brandage was still a powerful man for all his sixty years; a man of strong emotions whose natural rectitude had been warped by pride struggling against adversity, wincing under humiliation; a man accustomed to deal with hard but honest Nature and not with devious-minded men. Not with such men as his nephew Rufus, sleek and smooth and crafty-eyed, and with something else than whisky working upon his nerves.

Clump, creak—that was the complaint of the topmost stair. Now the old man's figure, which had become slightly stooped of late, was dimly visible coming down the corridor. His steps had in them an automatic quality learned in forty years. Nearly all his manhood Brandage had spent in this house; nearly every day he had made this trip more than once; many hall carpets had worn thin under his feet.

Stitt felt quite safe. The darkness behind him rendered him invisible and made the crack through which he was peering quite invisible too. The old man's movements could be calculated to an inch—indeed, he did not even glance Stitt's way.

Stitt saw him take hold of the door-knob opposite, and saw the door swing inward. Still holding the door-knob with his left hand—even such a strong old man thus uses chance supports—Brandage turned as he had turned so many times before and reached out with his right hand for the electric switch upon the wall. There came the click of the switch; the light leaped up.

The old man's face stood out in silhouette to Stitt—the jaw with the patriarchal beard, the thin lips, the thin hooked nose, the narrow high forehead, the deep-set eyes under shaggy, overhanging brows. Then—or perhaps there was no interval at all—a revolver shot crashed into the silence of the night, the stillness of that lonely house.

Though John Brandage was instantly killed, he stood for a moment motionless, his rigid muscles supporting him, his hold tight on the door-knob. So it happened that Stitt, in so far as he took time to think at all, thought there might be a chance to save him from the assassin, and leaped into the corridor; and when the old man crumpled down on his face, Stitt himself stood in the doorway, with his leveled revolver seeking a target.

The light showed Stitt to be a very small man, wiry-looking, neutral-colored as to clothing and with a thin, bronzed face, wide mobile mouth and sharp, quick eyes that grew more rather than less frightened when he saw that where the murderer *must* have stood to kill John Brandage, no one now stood at all. In fact, that there seemed absolutely no one in the room.

In the center of the room were some curls of powder-smoke. These eddied in a stir of air between the triple-branched chandelier in which two electric globes were glowing, and the floor; and on the floor under the chandelier lay the revolver with smoke still oozing from its muzzle. And the bullet which had let out John Brandage's life had struck the left side of his head, which had been turned squarely to receive it from that indicated spot in the center of the room.

It was weird, it was inexplainable, but at least no mystery in respect to the source of the crime. Stitt knew too well to whose account to place this thing. He was only too sure that the elimination of John Brandage was but one of the objects of this seeming masterpiece of crime. So the

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Hachey brothers worked, careful and callous logicians, planning results far ahead.

Stitt saw at a glance that the window was closed and clamped shut on the inside, and the screen clamped on the inside too. There was no closet. There was a bed, but no one was under it—Stitt looked to see. A miscellaneous assortment of clothes hung on hooks along the wall, but there was no room to hide behind them. Stitt observed these things mechanically but unhopefully; he knew there had been no time for the murderer either to escape or to hide between the fatal shot and his own appearance in the doorway.

How, then, had the shot been fired? Stitt could not answer that, but as he fled across the hall and softly closed the door of his hiding-place, he realized, with a chill at his heart, who the murderer had intended should be accused of the crime. He, Jack Stitt, the illegal intruder, the charlatan, hidden secretly here! He, who on the face of things, was the only man who had had the opportunity to kill!

He, and probably two others! His assistants, the Flaudreaus, would likewise be caught. Four lives with one blow! So the Hacheys did things.

Up the stairs were now hurrying Rufus Brandage and the housekeeper, and the feet of Rufus lacked shoes. Hearing the soft padding of them, Stitt smiled grimly. Now he was sure of one other thing, Rufus' reason for taking a bath at this unaccustomed hour. Indeed, he was a cautious youth! Certainly he had provided himself with a convincing alibi, if the thing ever came to a jury trial.

But Stitt, crouching there in the dark, realized that there was little likelihood of that. Now, mobs were more easily packed than juries. It had been different in the old days, when the Hachey brothers themselves selected the panels, and when puppet judges danced for them. In the glorious days, the fantastic days, of "old San Francisco"—careless, exuberant, generous, wild, impatient of restraint, tolerant of all things—when the Hachey brothers, now outlawed, were themselves the law.

"THEY weren't the heads of a gang then—more like an institution," the chief of police had said reminiscently to Stitt ten days before. "Graft in great big gobs, then; city contracts and the like—they called their saloon the Civic Center and no one smiled. It *was* the civic center.

"But even then the criminal element was with them strong. The Hachey brothers traded protection for votes—a dozen votes for every tenderloin hanger-on. Election was one day the crooks got plenty of outdoor exercise—they'd keep circling a block and voting each time. Many's the time I saw it.

"Well, times changed and changed, and they slipped and slipped, as you know. Even before Prohibition, 'Frisco'd changed a lot. And when that came, it seemed it would be the end of them. It was, at that, till the bootlegging army got started, and put in with the opium peddlers and the importers of Chinese coolies, and out-and-out crooks to form the biggest outlaw organization San Francisco's ever seen, with the Hachey brothers at its head.

"If you think it's easy to get 'em, you're mistaken. They work underground all the time, and what we know we can't usually prove, and when we can prove it, they alibi out with proof that's stronger. But we did make it so hot for them with raids and seizures that they had to get an out-of-town headquarters, and that's where old man Brandage and his ranch came in.

"When you see old man Brandage, you'll realize how well he's served 'em for heavy transportation and go-between and any outside work. He's so upright looking that a cop would begin looking for a moving picture camera if he caught him in a midnight hold-up in Bartlett Alley. But he fell for the Hachey brothers, being broke and proud and bitter, too, I suppose, since he lost his last red six months ago in a fake stock deal. His nephew Rufus helped persuade him. Rufus is sort of king of the dope peddlers, and a very good customer of his own.

"The little mortgage-plastered ranch that Brandage has left is mainly standing up on edge, one rocky gully after another, so it makes a mighty good hiding-place for barrels of booze and stolen goods and smuggled coolies, now and then. And for a meeting place, of course.

"I was going to raid the ranch, but there's the Sotoyome County authorities to work with, and the chance of a leak—the old man being mighty popular up there. Besides, the main thing I want is documents.

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"If I just got the goods, the whole Hachey gang would probably just alibi out again, as they've done before. But there must be documentary evidence up there, bills of sale and letters and the like, and that's what we need for a clincher. But just the touch of a match would destroy it in a raid.

"So I need to get some one into the house who can take his time and listen in till he gets an earful. Till he knows as much about the gang as old Dave Hachey himself. And above all, till he gets hold of those papers. Get them and enough other information and we can split the gang and have some of them turning State's evidence. As long as they feel solid, they'll manufacture alibis instead.

"Two men died from bootleg last week. I don't want to guess how many new dope addicts were started. Since you're not one of the force, I'm just asking you, are you on?"

"Why pick on me?" Stitt asked.

"First reason, because you're such an adaptable cuss; second, because a year and a half ago you were assistant to the "Marvelous Flaudreaus, Masters of Magic," third, because I think you're a pretty good citizen in spite of your eccentricities; fourth —well, you may want to make some money."

"Four bull's-eyes—maybe," grinned Stitt, "but what have the Flaudreaus to do with it?"

"Just this. They're in the Brandage house right now, and they're needing a ghost—the part you used to play in their vaudeville act."

"How come? The Flaudreaus don't give private seances."

"They don't—but they're doing it now. About ten days ago, they began a series of performances in Sebastopol. I was up there, just scouting around. I discovered that old man Brandage was interested, and got them to give him the works. He fell, hard. Though they couldn't get in touch with the particular spirit he called for."

"Why not?"

"Because I wanted to get the Flaudreaus into the house. And it was easy. It was his son, John, that the old man asked for—died seven years ago, age twenty. It was an easy argument that his spirit would be likeliest to revisit the house where it had spent most of its earthly career."

"I suppose so." Stitt wasn't smiling. "So they fooled the old man."

"Yes, so far; and they've found the house ready-made for their purpose. It's over forty years old, with unplastered ceilings, and they've got the cabinet set up under a disused storeroom. They've even managed a trapdoor in the ceiling by working when no one else was in the house."

"I see," said Stitt. "And what happens to the old man if the thing goes over?"

"Well, maybe he'd be saved a prison term. You see, in a regular raid, we'd have to take him. But we don't want to. It'd just stir Sotoyome County up—besides, he's only a tool. If you could give him some good advice, speaking as his dead son, and get him to come through with some information—well, you see how it'd work."

"Uh-huh! Since you want me to act as the Flaudreaus' assistant, I suppose their regular assistant has quit. I wonder why?"

"Frankly, for the same reason I'm wondering how much life insurance you're carrying. It's —— dangerous."

"It so happens I've plenty, but I believe my family is foolish enough to prefer not to have the money. That's one side of it. The other is, I've been a rolling stone, I've gathered no moss, and I find I need it to stuff cushions. I'm used to rough riding myself, but—well, the truth is, I want to see my kids get an even break with the rest. Education and all, and it takes money. Which leads to the eternal big question—how much?"

Well, the chief's answer had been satisfactory, though indefinite—or perhaps because of that fact, for Stitt was profoundly imbued with the gambler's spirit. He must figure on reward money split three ways, with captures as yet problematic. Ordinarily reward money would not have been sweet-smelling to Stitt, but in the case of the Hachey gang—he knew more intimately than the chief of the debauchery wrought by them, the misery and the crime for which they were responsible. No scruples troubled him, but instead, a fine fervor for the game.

A spy's game, indeed; but one dignified by hooded Death as opponent, with dice in hand. The chief left no doubt of that.

"Secrecy's the essence of the thing, and there'll be no police within call, remember that. And in three hours, the Hacheys can run a small army up there. If they strike—

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well, maybe you'll know it and maybe you won't, and likely we won't even be able to revenge you down here. The way they usually work, there's either no evidence at all, or plenty of it pointing in the wrong direction."

But Stitt had agreed, and the scheme had worked. Given decent luck, it could hardly have failed to work, for the Flaudreaus, father and son, were very clever; Stitt was clever, too; and old man Brandage was very eager to believe.

NIGHT after night, Stitt played the ghost of John Brandage's son. Sometimes Brandage was alone, sometimes flanked by friends who were usually skeptical and antagonistic, but though these might leave to cry "trickery" till the neighborhood hummed, none of them could even attempt to explain how the trickery was accomplished.

While they were present, they were silent. There were certain bizarre demonstrations that had been contrived to keep them so. And when the ghost appeared, it was evident that he must be a ghost, since all living persons in the house were accounted for. To John Brandage it was evident that he must be the ghost of his dead son, for the resemblance was perfect, even to the clothing—perfect as the resemblance of a photograph which stood plainly in view on the mantelpiece. And the ghost knew things that no one could have known except the dead boy, or old John Brandage himself, or a few of the neighbors, or some one who had access to the "Blue Books" kept by the spiritualists on the coast for the past fifty years.

Indeed, the scheme had worked well. In private seances John Brandage had asked for advice, and very good advice he had received and acted on; and in return had unwittingly given information that in earthly hand would be very disastrous to the Hacheys. Also he had written a letter to the Hacheys asking to be released from partnership with them, which letter Stitt had intercepted, and now had with those other precious papers inside his shirt, to be used to save the old man.

But somehow the Hacheys had got wind of it all; they had struck; and now Stitt was kneeling with his ear pressed to the door of his hiding place, fear and anger in his heart, listening to Rufus Brandage's high-pitched, half-hysterical voice, quivering with pretended sorrow:

"He's dead! Dead!"

"Oh, oh!" the housekeeper whimpered.

"There's the revolver. My God! But who killed him? Maria, *there's nobody in the house.*"

Came the sound of a swift movement, suddenly checked, as if the woman had started to flee, and Rufus had caught her.

"No, no! Stay here. I want you to remember this—everything—just as it happened. Where you were, where I was—we'll be suspected, likely."

"Oh, no! Nobody could——"

"But I tell you, we will be suspected. Nobody else could have—nobody else is in the house. The windows are all fastened, the doors are all locked. Uncle kept them locked always, you remember that. Nobody could get in. We're alone."

"But we didn't do it," fairly shrieked the housekeeper.

"Who did, then?"

There was a moment of silence, during which Stitt fancied the nervous old woman staring frightenedly at Rufus, groping for an answer. Then, she said what Stitt was sure Rufus wanted her to say:

"Mister Rufus, I've been afraid—I'm afraid now—but the Flaudreaus—it's them, as sure as you're alive. They c'n do anything—raise ghosts—oh, the things I've seen——"

"But they're out walking. They went out after dinner. They always go out after dinner."

"I know, but what difference does that make to them? If they c'n raise ghosts, make rapping everywhere, make tables and things move—you've seen 'em do it, too—what difference does it make where they are? They could've done this."

"By ——, you're right," cried Rufus as with sudden conviction. He mouthed an inarticulate curse murderously. "It was them, the ——! If I— Wait, there's somebody knocking."

Somebody was pounding on the door, heavily, rapidly, crying out:

"What's the matter? Open up, open up!"

Indeed, there were several voices. It must be a party which had chanced to be passing the house when the shot was fired, and which remembered instantly the dubious reports about it.

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"Tell 'em the way things happened," reiterated Rufus, as he and the woman descended the stairs, "and I'll go to the phone and rouse the town. The Flaudreaus will be trying to get away."

Stitt wished it were true that they would be trying to get away. But he knew they would presently return, if they were not caught meanwhile, to step unaware into a very nest of hornets—hornets whose sting meant Death.

Could he warn them? Could he get away himself? Stitt was sure that Rufus Brandage lied when he disclaimed knowledge of any invisible presence in the house; he was sure that Rufus and his fellows had discovered him, and had planned to foist on him the guilt of the act itself, and upon the Flaudreaus the guilt of complicity in the murder. In that case, the house would be watched to prevent his escape.

Certainly Rufus had also lied when he seemed to credit the Flaudreaus with the power to kill from a distance, and with this purpose: to set the old woman's garrulity working on the crowd that would gather. Rage against the Flaudreaus must be worked up a bit; rage against Stitt would spring up spontaneously and deadly enough, once he were discovered.

But Rufus—whose pallid face with twitching mouth-muscles, over-bright eyes, and look of incessant nervous strain, Stitt had studied many times in secret—Rufus was one to leave the possibly hazardous job of searching for Stitt to others.

Instead, Rufus was out to "raise the town." That crowd would be dangerous enough, life-long friends and neighbors of John Brandage, distrusting the Flaudreaus as aliens, despising them as tricksters, hating them for the untoward influence they had acquired over the old man, and now wrought to a pitch of fury by the discovery of his murder. On the average, men who were habituated to violence, rough, strong, fair-minded but passionate, and with none too much logic nor respect for written law.

But mingled with them would be more dangerous men still, men less passionate but more sinister, cold-blooded, cunning men; men who would just happen along, but who would know just what they were there for. The Hacheys knew mobs, they had raised and used them before, and on other occasions had made murder masquerade as justice.

So ran Stitt's rather incoherent thoughts. But his actions ran swifter and simpler—to get away, was the thing; to get away and if possible warn the Flaudreaus. Happily, he had already prepared for his midnight flitting. Glad he now was that he had prepared so cautiously with an old rusty hook screwed into the wall of the house well to one side of the window, so that the rope which he now fastened upon the hook and dropped to the ground would not likely be discovered by searchers within the house.

FROM the Pacific a mist had crept in, chilly, like a wet blanket—like a blanket, too, cutting off the light of the stars. Stitt shivered as he started to creep through the uncut, waist-high grass, thick as a jungle. He had got away none too soon. By chance three hunters had been passing the house when the shot was fired; it was they who had pounded at the door; and their voices, ugly with rage, drifted out to him.

"The Flaudreaus!"

"The crooks!"

"The fakers!"

"The murderin' ——!"

"But they're out walking. They'll have an alibi."

So Rufus anticipated and discredited that alibi before it was presented.

"—— their alibi! Let their ghost give an alibi. Masters of magic, they call themselves! Masters of murder, too, I guess. Have you searched the house?"

"Not yet. I just——"

"Well, we'll take care o' that. You go on phonin'."

Stitt cut straight across the field toward the slope of the hill to the north. When he reached the concealing underbrush at the foot of that hill, it would be time enough to turn in toward the fence which bordered the road, thence to make his way still north along inside that fence until he met the Flaudreaus returning. That is, if they had gone that way. He was by no means sure of that.

Perhaps they had gone to the village to make a purchase. If they had, they might pray for a cell in the jail, and that the jail was strong.

Stitt recalled them, father and son, a quiet and gentle couple. Clever they were beyond question, masters of magic indeed; or

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rather, masters of their own mental and physical powers, of tricks of jugglery and sleight of hand, of sound-tubes and reaching-rods, of luminous paints and magic mirrors, of capsules from which immaterial but softly glowing genii appear in the dark, wonderful as the Fisherman's jar; and of all the chemical formulas of the conjurers.

Yet they were not tricksters. Yet they lived honestly. Their stage performance was an innocent thing, mystifying only to entertain, legitimate as a play. In Sebastopol they had stooped to charlatantry, but for a sufficient purpose. To defeat the Hacheys, to save a city from debauchery!

Stitt moved invisible through the black night; he thanked Heaven for the recent rain and the present mist that kept the damp grass from crackling and made possible almost noiseless progress. Careful as a stalker of game he crept along, and presently stopped in his tracks, frozen into immobility as a voice hardly louder than a whisper came out of the darkness.

"If the —— ghost was coming, he'd be here by now."

"I suppose so. I suppose he's hid in the house. They're lookin' for him. See the lights."

"I hope they don't find him right away. It'll be better if they don't."

"How d'ye make that out? If they find him, he's a goner."

"Maybe so, and maybe not. The crowd isn't big enough yet. Take's a big crowd to hang a man. And usually some interested persuasion, too. Besides, we want the Flaudreaus."

"O' course, but Sanders and that bunch will get them, all right."

"Sure, but the whole thing's got to be done simultaneous, don't you see? And with us eggin' 'em on. Like that Paso Rosa lynchin'. Only this is smarter—the smartest thing Steve Hachey ever cooked up. You know, makin' the Flaudreaus spill their own beans. Makin' them turn themselves up, and that —— ghost as well."

"It's smart all right. I was some afraid of Rufus Brandage, though. He's a weak sister, but he's come through with the goods on this deal, all right."

"He sure has. ——, it's cold. Say, there they come now. They've got the Flaudreaus."

Stitt turned his head. For several minutes, he had heard the sound of a crowd coming down the road from the direction of the village. It was not a noisy crowd. It tramped along with only a low muttering, like the muttering of soldiers who have looked upon their dead, and who are out for revenge.

"They've got the Flaudreaus," Stitt's thoughts echoed the gangster's words. "They'll hang the Flaudreaus."

"Well," said one of the two men in front of Stitt, "the show'll soon start, now. We'd better work in closer, so we'll be ready to hand when the final show-down comes."

"That's right. —— this fog!"

From the grass not ten yards in front of Stitt, two forms arose and started for him. So dark was it, and so thick the mist, that he could not see them at all, but he could judge their movements by the sound, and in a moment it was evident that they would pass Stitt at a distance of about two paces. Stitt was by now crouched down with his head below the level of the grass; he was in little danger of discovery; and every life-preserving instinct in him urged him to remain concealed there until they had passed, and then to creep away. The road beyond was safe for him, with San Francisco at the end of it—San Francisco and the praise of his chief and the rewards to be gained by the information in those papers inside his shirt.

But Stitt leaped as the two men came opposite him. His muscles had been like coiled springs, and their release was like an explosion. The momentum of his slender body was not great, but Stitt took chances of a report, and added the weight of his heavy policeman's revolver, muzzle forward, to his blow.

The sound of the blow was muffled by hat and hair, but the man he struck went down. His companion whirled.

He felt the muzzle of Stitt's revolver against his ribs. He himself had more than once so held a gun against a victim's body, tense fingers against the trigger.

"Still! Be still!" Stitt hissed.

The man stood without a sound. Stitt wondered if the other, on the ground, was dead or stunned or merely shamming unconsciousness. He moved so as to place them both equally before the menace of his gun.

"I'm from Headquarters," he said. "I've

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heard your talk. You've planned murder, and I shoot at one wrong move. Sit down!"

The other obeyed.

"You daren't shoot, though," he said sullenly.

"Try me and see," whispered Stitt.

Carefully, he circled the couple till he was behind them.

"Now take your revolver and just gently toss it over your shoulder."

"Like —— I will."

"Like —— you won't. Feel of this."

He pressed the muzzle of his revolver against the back of the other's neck. "I'm squeezing the trigger. Get busy."

It was partly bluff on Stitt's part, for he was realizing by now that he had probably grasped the proffered forelock of opportunity too hastily, and that logic was on the side of the other when he declared Stitt dare not shoot. A shot would bring the crowd tumbling out of the house in a hurry; he could not hope to escape; and this second shooting would cinch the conviction in every one's mind that he was responsible for the first. Besides, shooting another in cold blood would be impossible to Stitt. But the other could not know either the extent of Stitt's squeamishness or of his reasoning powers, and the menace of that cold circle of steel overcame his resolution.

He tossed back his revolver, and then, at Stitt's direction, his companion's. Stitt kicked them further into the deep grass.

"Now take off your coat. Catch this pocket-knife. Rip off the sleeves."

After the first yielding, the other made no pretense of resistance.

"It's —— cold," he grumbled.

"The grave is considerably colder. Now, tie your own feet and tie 'em tight. It's pretty dark, but I can see what you're doing."

In about ten minutes, Stitt had them safely trussed. The man he had struck recovered consciousness in time to be of some use in securing the other. Then Stitt bound this second man's hands behind him, went over the knots and tightened them here and there, repeated the operation with the first man, and then again thrust the revolver against his forehead.

"Listen! One other thing: How was old man Brandage shot?"

"I don't know that."

"You do. It was Hachey's scheme. You're in with him. I saw enough to check up whether or not you tell the truth. Come, out with it. I give you five and then fire. One, two——"

"Don't count, gov'nor!" The man's nerve was broken by now, and his voice rose too shrilly for Stitt's comfort. "I don't know, honest. None of us know. It was Hachey's scheme, but he don't give them things away. All I know is, he was to be killed, and the blame of it laid on the ghost and the Flaudreaus. You're the ghost, ain't you?" he queried with a weak effort to laugh.

"Never mind that," rasped Stitt.

Stitt hesitated for a moment—then, with some strips of cloth, gagged them swiftly. Likely the fellow was telling the truth; likely Hachey would keep as his own secret such a cleverly mysterious method of murder. In any case, Stitt had no more time to lose. He was sorry he had already lost so much. But the successful encounter had nerved him well, had filled him with an unreasoning elation and a sort of admiration for himself, and a warm glow now tingled through his body.

DURING the time he had been busy with the men, several automobiles had chugged up the lane, their lights coming dim and diffused through the mists. Horses' hoofs had pounded; men's feet had slogged through the mud. Voices raucous and hoarse, voices deep and intense, voices shrill and eager, had passed in procession from the lane to the house. But from within the house, where the dead man lay, and where the alien Flaudreaus were held, there came to Stitt's ears only the sound of a single insistent voice, raised, it seemed, in questioning.

Stealthily, silently, yet with a hurry in his movements, Stitt went back to that house. The search for him seemed to have been abandoned; neither light nor sound of movements came from the upper floor. So, hand over hand he went up over the rope which dangled in the blackness down the wall of the house; silently he reached out sidewise, caught the frame, pulled himself over to the window and then crawled through it. All the while his mind raced like a swift mechanism. Danger and instant necessity spurred it as some men's minds are spurred by drugs—at first. He had yet to save the Flaudreaus; he had yet to learn how John Brandage had been killed.

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With the Flaudreaus in the hands of the mob, their salvation would be possible only if he discovered the manner of the murder—if, indeed, it would be possible then.

Whose hand had held the revolver to such a deadly aim, whose finger had pressed the trigger so instantly as the lights went up? Why, no one's. No one had been in the room.

And yet, as a trained assassin rids himself of his instrument of crime, some agency had flung the fatal revolver to the floor. It was unbelievable, but it must be believed. Standing there in front of the window, in that room which had been his hiding-place, Stitt racked his brain for an answer.

Limned in the darkness before Stitt's eyes, with every detail clear, appeared again the exact scene that had met his eyes as he had rushed into the room of mysterious murder. He searched it frantically. Somewhere in that scene, there must be a clue to the puzzle.

The dead man on the floor. The safe in the corner. Opposite the door, the bed. The clothes hanging on hooks about the wall. The closed and fastened window. The smoking revolver in the middle of the room. Above it, the three-branched chandelier, with glass shades like inverted bowls. Two shades glowing.

Stitt caught his breath. He held it. For a moment he stood with contracted muscles and motionless eyeballs, staring straight into the velvet blackness of the room. Then slowly he relaxed, with a soft expiration of breath. And as he did so, he became consciously aware of a harsh and authoritative voice coming from the room below, where the Flaudreaus had performed their mysteries, and in which they seemed likely to be condemned to die.

"We're givin' you your chance. We think you're fakers. Murderers, too. We think your materialized spirit, as you call it, was another man that you had hid here somewhere. We think he killed John Brandage because no one else could've killed him—no one else was in the upper part of the house. And if he did, you were in the deal.

"There's just one way you can convince us that's not so—materialize your spirit again. Produce him, ——, you both, or swing. We'll —— soon find out if he's a spirit or not. If he is," derisively, "probably we'll let you go. But if he's flesh and blood——"

"Oh, ——," broke in another voice, "what's the use o' that? They'll be pullin' another trick if we don't look out."

A few other voices approved, but the first speaker insisted stubbornly.

"Nobody's goin' to be able to say we didn't give 'em a chance. Now, you ——, what do you say?"

Stitt heard the elder Flaudreau reply in a marvelously composed voice.

"You are all mistaken. There's no one with us. We did materialize the spirit of John Brandage's son. Now you tell us that John Brandage has been shot. That's all we know about it. Some of you here saw us in town at the very time—"

The crowd jeered. It was plain to Stitt that the jeering was led by the men not native to Sebastopol. Stitt thrilled a little. The elder Flaudreau was a brave man. He could not have understood the killing, but he knew Stitt was no murderer and was protecting him as best he could. And he realized, as did Stitt, that the crowd could neither be convinced nor placated by the truth. But Stitt waited to hear no more. Silently as if he were indeed a ghost, he crept across the room, he flitted through the hall, he entered once more the room of the inexplicable slaying.

The lights were still on. The body was still there. The revolver still lay where it had fallen. Stitt knelt and examined it closely. He did not touch it. Then, standing, he looked up at the chandelier.

A decisive ultimatum floated up the hall, and broke in upon Stitt's thought. He was thinking that the truth would still be disastrous—the truth as he had discovered it. For the Flaudreaus would still be the tricksters, the charlatans, the masters of false magic, the men whom the crowd would convict.

"You see this watch. We give you two minutes. If you don't decide by then to give us an example of your miracle-working, we'll know what to do." So, with a note of finality, concluded the voice down-stairs.

Stitt suddenly smiled. In his face there was the glow of a magnificent inspiration. Sometimes such inspirations, though sound, will not bear cold thought. Thought spoils their perfection, contemplation reveals shadowing and ruinous possibilities. Doubt kills. But if they are seized like an iron, flaming hot, and instantly used——

Stitt swept some garments from the

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hooks. In a moment he was back in the room which had been his hiding-place for so many days. He approached the window. When he was within two feet of it, he stooped, and took hold of something on the floor.

The floor had once been carpeted. If there had been light in the room, it would seem that Stitt had taken hold of the head of a tack which had been carelessly left in the floor when the carpet was lifted. But Stitt, pulling upon the head of that seeming tack, lifted a section of the flooring about two feet square.

Though the room below, in which the crowd threatened the Flaudreaus, must have been lighted, the opening thus revealed was black as pitch. This was because it was an opening into the top of the black cloth cabinet of the Flaudreaus, which extended from floor to ceiling, and was as opaque as a closed vault.

Stitt reached through the opening and pulled up a yard-wide strip of stout black cloth which hung evenly against one side of the cabinet. The upper end of the cloth was attached securely to the ceiling. To each edge of the cloth, at its lower end, were attached two metal buttons. When these were inserted into buttonholes midway the length of the cloth, a pocket was formed into which Stitt lowered himself. The top of the pocket reached to his chest.

Very careful not to cause the cloth wall of the cabinet to waver, Stitt then leaned forward, parted a fold in the cloth, and placed one eye against a small peep-hole, through which he was able to view the room.

The Flaudreaus were backed up against the cabinet. There was a little space between them and the front of the crowd. The Brandage house had been built in lavish days of free timber when men believed in space, and the room was large enough to hold easily the forty-odd men that were gathered there.

It was a mixed crowd. There were men ugly as gargoyles, men handsome as Apollos; unshaven men whose clothing hung in rags and two village dandies with oiled hair shining; ranchers and clerks, farmhands and mechanics, loafers with dull animal curiosity in their eyes. Some faces were grave and some expectant and more were bitter and menacing; two only were frightened, and one was a feeble-wit with forehead aslant and loose-hanging jaw who shrank in a corner and looked at the Flaudreaus as if they were fiends from the pit. The other was Rufus Brandage, though he wore a partially deceptive mask of baffled rage.

No unanimity was there as yet. But mingled with these were a dozen of another type, hard-faced, ill-favored men who wore their unaccustomed country garb with awkwardness; these scowled angrily, kept their calculating, dangerous eyes fixed upon the Flaudreaus, kept inflammatory phrases tossing back and forth.

"An old man, too."

"Cold-blooded murder."

"Framed-up alibi."

"Jury'd never convict, though."

"For money, o' course—his nephew says there's a lot in the safe."

"If they'd done this up my way, in Humboldt, they wouldn't last long."

"Thirty seconds more," announced a big man with a flaming red face and red beard who stood in the front of the crowd, a watch in his hand.

A stir ran through the crowd. The dozen sinister-faced strangers each pressed a little forward. Scattered well among the crowd, they were a dozen nuclei from which the movement spread. No one could have told who started it. Each man who shrank from what the movement portended must have thought that he was the only one who shrank. Consequently he was silent. Consequently his mind suffered a change, adapting itself to the seeming unanimity. So a single purpose was being forced upon the crowd. So it was swiftly being welded into a unit, the mob, the many-legged human beast which kills.

"Remember," the word was passed, "there's another. There's three of them. We must tear the house down if we have to. We must get the other man."

The Flaudreaus stood motionless. The thing that had probably saved them thus far was their apparent fearlessness. They were alike in that, and in every other way except in age. Both were tall, thin to emaciation, dark-skinned, narrow-featured, with glowing black eyes. They looked like foreigners. The elder Flaudreau wore a carefully trimmed Van Dyke beard. He was perhaps forty years old, the boy no more than twenty.

"I have already told you," the elder Flaudreau began, "that spirits can only be

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materialized under certain conditions——"

Suddenly his voice broke off. A startled look came to his face. It passed immediately into a look of exaltation. With face uplifted, he stood staring over the heads of the crowd. He seemed to have forgotten the crowd, to be listening to some voice audible only to him. Really he was translating a message in code which Stitt was tapping out, with a reaching-rod, upon his back, which was pressed against the black cloth cabinet.

The crowd fell silent. Seeing him listening, it listened too. The allotted time passed, and no one stirred. The spell that had been welding the crowd into a mob weakened a little; each individual became himself again; and a sense of the coming of something strange crept over most of them. They waited, relaxing. But the resolution to kill that most of them had formed was not yet abated.

When the elder Flaudreau spoke again, his tone was merely formal.

"Very well. I have had a message from our control. I can promise you a spirit manifestation if you will comply with the usual conditions——"

"It's a trick," challenged some one.

Flaudreau glanced in his direction and replied quietly, patiently, with a sort of impersonal wonder:

"It is your demand. We comply with it. We remain in your power. The spirit will also remain in your power if, as you claim, we are tricksters and he is a man like ourselves."

"Fair enough!" said the red-faced belligerent-looking man, thrusting his watch back in his pocket.

In the main, the rest agreed with him. They must agree, in order to remain consistent. The dozen or so from the city were satisfied; they knew the ghost would be Stitt, delivered into their hands. They glanced at each other, nodding their heads, and began working their way toward the front of the crowd.

Flaudreau ignored this movement. He also ignored the scattered protests. These mainly dealt with the possibility of the early arrival of officers of the law. But other men, better informed, whispered that the sheriff's office at Paso Rosa had not yet been informed, that the sheriff was in Healdsburg, and that the local constable, being with the crowd in spirit, had conveniently absented himself in person from the town.

Still, the Flaudreau's ascendency over the crowd was as precarious as the equilibrium of a tight-rope walker, demanding the same unceasing watchfulness and activity. Without pausing for an instant, he went on with his instructions. His sonorous voice assumed the easy authority of a doctor's at a sick bed, or a priest's at a funeral.

Of the half-dozen men who were peering in from the hall, all were to come into the room but one, who would remain outside and guard the meeting against interruption. Since the room would be nearly dark during the seance, a man should be stationed before each window, to prevent any one from escaping. The others in the room were to dispose themselves thus and so, those in front sitting on the floor, others in the dozen chairs that the room contained, and those in the rear standing, so every one could have a fair view of the cabinet. Then the cabinet must be inspected by a committee.

The cabinet was inspected, with eager thoroughness. It was inspected to the very ceiling, by means of curtain rods thrust up from below. Nothing was found, for Stitt was at that time seated on the floor of the room above, working busily on certain paraphernalia, with the trap-door closed, and the loop of cloth let down against the cloth side of the cabinet.

The persons of the Flaudreaus were investigated next, their pockets turned inside out, their clothing searched all over. Then the younger Flaudreau was tied in the chair inside the cabinet by farmhands who cursed as they pulled the knots tight. The same men looped a stout rope around his thin waist, fastened it to his clothing with wires twisted tight, and passed the ends through holes in opposite sides of the cabinet, holes which had been concealed before by folds in the cloth.

"Pull the rope tight," said the elder Flaudreau, after the two farmhands had taken hold of these two projecting ends of it. "Tight enough that you can feel him breathing. And you, and you, hold me."

He offered his wrists to two ranchers in the front of the crowd.

"And you," to another man, "please close the curtains of the cabinet. And you, kindly turn out the lights—but no!"

That last request had been directed to Rufus Brandage, who was seated in one of

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the chairs near the middle of the room. But as the young man rose, Flaudreau, with his glowing eyes upon Rufus, started perceptibly, so that every one in the crowd noticed it, and with what seemed his first loss of composure, recoiled a step, swaying the two ranchers backward.

So he stood for a moment staring at Rufus, with eyes widening unnaturally. Rufus' eyes widened too, staring fascinatedly into Flaudreau's, and then, when he realized that men were shifting their gaze from Flaudreau to him, he sat down suddenly, even before Flaudreau, regaining his self-control with an apparent effort, turned to another man and directed him to switch off the electric lights.

When the man got up to do it, Flaudreau directed another to light a small candle which stood on a table in the corner of the room nearest the door, so that a vague, yellowish twilight succeeded the white glare of the incandescents. The sudden change set men shuffling uneasily and straining to see Flaudreau in the near-darkness; and this disturbance might have continued had there not come from somewhere overhead, a whisper. There were no words, a faint, inarticulate sibilation, audible to all but no more than just audible to any—a drifting, incorporeal breath. No man was sure that his neighbor heard it, and Flaudreau himself did not seem to hear it, for he broke in upon the sudden tense silence:

"I get a suggestion—a strong suggestion—that in spite of opposing influences, a spirit is trying to speak. Already the medium has passed into a trance. Very soon— Ah!"

A STRAIN of faint music began to sound, music that seemed to float like a drifting vapor over the heads of the crowd. It was not quite like the music of a violin or a harp or a guitar; and in fact, it came from a stringed instrument especially designed by the Flaudreaus, self-playing, and very light, so it could be manipulated easily at the end of a twelve-foot reaching-rod. For a few moments the music was merely soothing and beautiful, then came a crash, and an angry discord, as if the instrument had been jerked violently away from the player by other hands. And the savage, throbbing near-harmony that followed was in turn interrupted and supplanted by an angry, incoherent, hardly human voice, uttering a jumble of sounds that were like mutilated words, like words forced out by passion from the throat of a man gone suddenly dumb. Only three words, thrice repeated, were clearly pronounced:

"Murder—shot—tell."

Men straightened up, under sudden unexpected tension. Somewhere near the rear of the room, one came to his feet with an oath—

"By ——, somebody struck me."

But he was drawn down by his neighbors, and immediately became quiet. Those three words, fragments of a disjointed promise, filled the room with a somewhat horrible expectancy; and Flaudreau's own voice, low and vibrant, with a touch of awe and wonder in it, was enough to send another thrill along the spines of the waiting men.

"Hush!" he said. "I didn't expect— It is a newly disembodied spirit—an angry spirit—struggling to speak. It will be difficult——"

Every one could see that he was still being held by the two men. Every one could also see that the two farmhands still held the end of the rope that encircled the waist of the younger Flaudreau—indeed, they whispered that they could feel the regular *tug, tug*, of his breathing. Every one had the sense of another presence, human or ghostly, and, whether skeptic or half-believing, was alert to catch sight of it; and so, when a loud rapping somewhere near the ceiling at the back of the room broke in upon Flaudreau's words, probably every one in the room turned his head.

Even if they had not, it is probable that no one could have told whence came the luminous apparition that the next moment stood in front of the cabinet.

Those who first laid eyes upon it, gasped; and the others in their turn; and in the silence that followed, no one seemed to breathe save the half-wit, who went off into a spell of gibbering, which was checked by the threat of somebody's fist. Otherwise, those who had till now been swayed by many different emotions, were now a unit in shocked astonishment, for the ghost that had appeared was not the ghost that some of them had seen before, not the ghost they had all vaguely expected to see, not the ghost of the junior Brandage, dead these seven years.

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It was the ghost of old man Brandage himself, whose dead body still lay up-stairs, and whose murder they had gathered to avenge.

Surely it was he! No one could have a doubt of it, even in that dim light. There was the patriarchal beard, the arched nose, the high, narrow forehead topped with thin white hair. There was the tall and powerful frame, clothed in the dead man's clothing, which now gleamed, as did face, beard, hair and hands, with a shimmering white luminosity. Stooping slightly, as in life, and with his own unmistakable pace, slow, dogged, indomitable, John Brandage came on; and there were many there that shuddered and tried to look away; and of those who had resolved to seize the ghost when it first appeared, not one stirred, being held to their seats by fear and something stronger than fear.

Even the men from the city kept to their seats. Only, from somewhere in the center of the gathering, came a choked cry and the sound of a sudden movement, instantly checked. But no one paid any attention to it.

Flaudreau spoke in a whisper, but it carried over the room.

"His time is short. If any of you have questions to ask him, do it at once."

No one spoke, or even stirred.

"Please!" Flaudreau's words were hurried, a little anxious. "He is trying for a point of contact. Some of you who know him, who knew him in life, help him by asking a question."

Suddenly a neighbor of the dead man gathering courage, asked in a strained, hoarse voice—

"Is that you, John?"

"Yes. I've been murdered. I came back to tell——"

The specter's swift, hollow voice died weakly away.

"That's what we want to know," with a touch of eagerness. "Who——"

"I went up to my room," the ghost broke in with weak vehemence. "I opened the door. I turned on the lights. There was no one in the room. But I was shot. The revolver fell from the chandelier. I saw it fall. Who put it there?

"Ah, ——!"

This time the hoarse and frightened cry from the center of the room was louder and articulate. No one turned to look, for no one could take his eyes from the ghost; but guilt was in that cry; and there was no surprize when the ghost lifted a mysteriously luminous arm and pointed accusingly in that direction.

"Who watched me, watched me, watched me, with his devil's eyes, seeing that I always stood just so, left hand on the door knob, right on the electric switch? Who marked the outline of my shadow on the wall, and trained the gun upon it? Who——"

"Don't! Don't!"

There were some who thought that the man who uttered that pleading cry addressed those other men who were holding him, but they knew he pleaded with the ghost.

"Let him confess, as I confess. I, John Brandage! I joined a gang of thieves—some of them are here. I helped pollute the people—drugs, drink, poison. If you look, you will find in this house, in the caves back of it—proof, proof! But I repented. I was going to quit. My dead son's urging— Then *he* killed me. The man who got me into this thing, who introduced me to Dave Hachey——"

Hubbub was beginning. The men from the city, massed solidly, were on their feet, muttering oaths and half-formed questions at each other. Others were springing up here and there and crowding toward the middle of the room, where a fear-racked young man with broken nerves struggled to escape from two farmers who held him, and as he struggled, he cried out a denial that was in itself a confession:

"I didn't! I didn't!"

"He—he killed me. My nephew Rufus!" cried the ghost, and was gone.

Gone in a flash of luminous garments and luminous mask that seemed to fly back into the cabinet. And it appeared that from the place where the ghost had stood, some one—a small and wiry person—dashed toward the door. His small size helped him make way through the growing commotion, he squeezed through narrow spaces, clambered over shoulders, elbowed, jostled and fought along, the one man there with a definite purpose; and at last with a flying leap mounted a chair before the door, and swung around just as the lights went on.

"No one's to leave the room," he called out in an arresting voice. "You've heard

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part of the truth, wait for the rest of it. *Who's afraid of the truth?*"

Certainly he did not look afraid of anything—this vibrant, vivid personality, this diminutive man whose quick friendly blue eyes seemed at once to challenge and to appeal—and when a revolver spoke in the middle of the room, and a bullet splintered the door behind him, he laughed almost gaily.

"Thank you," he cried. "And thank *you*," as a burly rancher wrested away the gun. "But that was another little bit of the truth. Who's afraid of my talk? Not you men of Sebastopol, are you?

"But those others, those strangers, those men you don't know! Who are they, and what are they here for? I'll tell you—no, *stop him!*"

At the top of his voice, Stitt shouted the warning as one of the men whom he accused swung a chair at the chandelier. But some one had already crowded in against the man, and the blow fell short.

"You see, they want to get away. Like Rufus Brandage there, they want to get away. Because they're as guilty as he is—they came to cover up the murder, to throw the blame on the Flaudreaus and me, to excite you to hang us. And why? Because we've got the evidence against them. We've got the evidence about the murder—and other things! No! Don't let them out. *Hold them! Hold them!*"

"*Outside! Outside! Outside!*"

The word passed in a sibilant undertone from man to man of the scowling group, and as at a football signal, they bunched and silently started for the door.

"By ——," yelled a hesitant rancher, "that settles it. They're crooks!" and threw himself in their way.

"The little chap's right," piped up an elderly man with twinkling, shrewd eyes. "Don't let 'em get away, boys."

These were honest men, mostly, courageous and manly men, and they had nearly been tricked into a reasonless murder. Realization had come to some in a flash and to others slowly, but with the realization came grim anger to all, and from left and right they pressed into the path of the crooks. Seeing that, the latter threw off all disguise, and formed a flying wedge which fought viciously, with fists and whirling chairs and dangerous blackjacks mysteriously produced—fought like a single unit, a many-legged dumb beast struggling silently for the door.

Guns came out on both sides, but were used as clubs, for a single shot would start a massacre of friends and foes, and no one cared to fire it. Fists dealt blows like mallets, coats were ripped from straining bodies, men were knocked down and trampled unless pulled from the scrimmage by friends. And slowly, slowly, in spite of the numbers against them, the strategic formation of the gangsters won them their way toward the door.

Before the door stood Stitt, watching the struggling mass work closer to him. From his position, it looked like a human whirlpool, revolving around that fighting, moving center. Men flung themselves against the press of it, shoved, clung, braced themselves, dealt heavy blows, and then were flung off again, reeling—two falling unconscious, stunned by the blackjacks. And to Stitt it might have seemed that the fight was lost, that his enemies would win their way to freedom, had he not known that he held in his own hand what was really the key to victory.

It was a skeleton key to the strong old door, which he had locked at the beginning of the struggle, fearing that the gangsters would break through and win out. Now, on the other side of that door, men clamored and pounded for admission—ranchers and townspeople who had been gathering there. Stitt waited for the strategic moment to open the door and let in these reinforcements. Soon, very soon now, when each native in that room knew each face among the strangers, so there would be no escapes when the triumph came.

Soon, very soon! Well—*now!*

It was over. It was ended. Before the weight of the newcomers, the point of the flying wedge was blunted, crumpled back; the wedge itself was flattened out, broken up; the group became a scattering flight of individuals. These were caught, flung down, trussed up, all of the gangsters but one—one who had not joined in the fight, who had been caught in the swirling outskirts of the crowd, and who now made a dash for a window.

It was Rufus Brandage, bending low, panic-stricken face half-hidden by scrawny arms uplifted.

Stitt might have shot him, but did not. Instead, he started after him. He saw

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Rufus leap right off the floor, and drive head and shoulders through the window pane. The glass was shattered as with the force of an explosion; a thousand fragments flew everywhere; but the wire screen outside the window held, and Rufus was flung back, sprawling. He started to get up.

Stitt was almost upon him. From somewhere behind Stitt a revolver spoke. Rufus fell back on the floor.

"One less for State's evidence," laughed some one savagely, but it was not the man who had fired the shot. No one seemed to know who had fired it, and indeed, it was never revealed. It might have been one of Rufus' companions in crime, afraid of further betrayal; it was more probably a friend of the murdered John Brandage.

Stitt bent over Rufus. It was a merciful shot. The murderer never spoke again.

STITT himself felt suddenly faint and weak. The room was going around. A brawny rancher had him by the arm.

"Seems to me you've got a lot of explainin' to do yerself, young feller. Who are ye and what are ye here for? And how after all, *was* the old man killed? I don't get that at all. And I was here two minutes after the shootin'——"

Stitt laughed weakly.

"You were one of the bunch, then, that gummed Rufus Brandage's game. If you hadn't come along when you did, there wouldn't be any neat little murder-machine still up there inside one of the shades of the chandelier—the shade that hasn't any electric light globe in it. Rufus would have had a chance to hide it, of course. And if I hadn't been able to see it, I might not've been sure the way the shootin' was done. Though I was almost sure, at that——"

"What the —— are you talking about? Murder-machine?"

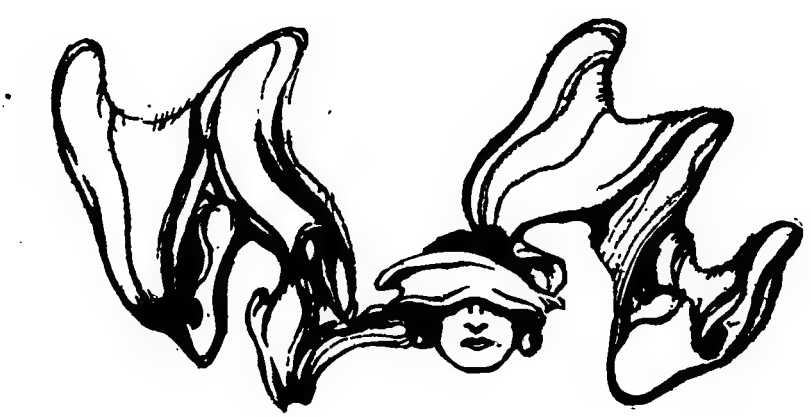
"Sure! Some wires, and an electromagnet. And a piece of soft iron that must have fitted on the tip of the trigger of the revolver. The wires to hold the revolver in place in front of the electromagnet, but loose-like, so the recoil would throw it to the floor. And the electromagnet connected up with the electric light wires, of course. So when the current came on, the piece of iron was pulled back against the trigger, which was probably on a hair spring. You see? It was simple enough—anybody could fix it.

"But, of course, it wouldn't have worked if John Brandage hadn't happened to have stood in the same identical position every night—left hand on the door knob, right hand turning on the light. And if—well, the ghost explained the rest of it."

"The ghost, eh!" some one laughed shortly. "You're a pretty smart young man, ain't ye. Maybe you'll explain how it came you were all ready to make up as old man Brandage, like ye did."

Stitt forced a smile—he was really feeling all in—and bowed to the two Flaudreaus, who were standing looking on.

"Thank these two gentlemen for that—a good magician's equipment is always sufficient for anything. And now—a rather busy evening—if you don't mind— Well, after we've jailed this bunch, I think I'll rest awhile."



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ACCORDING TO NG LOY ☆

BY W·C·TUTTLE

Author of "Blind Trails," "Reputation," etc.

FATE is a queer dealer in the game of life; a dealer whose sense of humor is not hampered by the grim play of put-and-take. It is not always a square deal. Fate knows how to stack the cards, and many a pat-hand is beaten by a four-card draw.

But Fate never dealt a worse assorted trio than it handed to Trinity Creek. An Irishman, a Swede and a Chinaman. Three court-cards that never belonged in the deck.

Ng Loy, the Chinaman, came first. Loy was very old. He had come from Seattle in the gold rush; a little, round-shouldered Celestial, wrinkled of face, but with the heart of an Argonaut. For a number of years he had clawed over deserted placer dumps; gleaning what gold had escaped the hurried sluicing, but now he had accumulated a grub-stake and penetrated to Trinity Creek—far from humanity.

Lars Anderson and Jimmy Mulcahy were partners. Wherever a strike was reported—there you would find them. Lars was a huge figure of a man, mustached like a Viking, slow of thought, slow of action. He growled in his throat like a grizzly bear, drank whisky like men drink water and was as superstitious as a voodoo worshipper.

Jimmy Mulcahy was a trifle smaller than Lars, typically Irish, and, if such a thing were possible, more superstitious.

Lars and Jimmy had been thawing gravel across the range from Trinity Creek; overstaying their grub-stake in hopes of uncovering some rich streak—which did not appear. The lack of food did not disturb them, because of the fact that they had made a grub-cache a few months before at a spot about fifty miles away, and this would suffice to take them back to an outfitting post.

But two days before they were ready to leave their diggings the Winter moved in upon them; a howling, swirling blizzard, in which the temperature tumbled downward until the fir-trees snapped like fire-crackers and the dirt floor of their cabin frosted to within inches of the rough fireplace.

Day after day it screamed and tore at the little cabin, while Lars and Jimmy humped beside the fire, swathed in blankets, watched their food supply dwindle to a mere handful of beans and a piece of bacon the size of a walnut.

"Christmas daisy, and wouldn't ye think it would blow itself out?" queried Jimmy. "Sure, there must be a tail-ind to it somewhere, Lars."

"Ay guess she's de round vind," said Lars hopelessly. "She goes round and round, all de time. Bot den, of course, she'll vare out sometime, Yimmy."

"And we'll be a fine pair of hunks o' ice. If ye stop breathin' for a minute ye can feel yerself harden. Why in the —— didn't we mush out a week ago, I dunno?"

"If Ay ever get out of hare—ba gosh, Yimmy; how you like for feel de hot stove and de hot whisky. *Skoal!*"

**This is an "Off-the-Trail" Story. See footnote at bottom of first contents page.*

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Lars shook his head sadly,

"Ay guess dis be de finish for us."

Jimmy threw back his blanket and got to his feet.

"Finish, ye say? Ye cock-eyed Swede, are ye quittin'? Are ye goin' to let a bit of a blow and a handful of snow make ye lie down and die?"

Lars got heavily to his feet and began folding his blanket.

"Ay guess we go now, eh, Yimmy? Ho, ho, ho, ho! Ve bite holes in de vind, eh? We find de grub-cache and mush to Dugout City. Ho, ho, ho! Ay am de cock-eyed Svede and you are de crazy Irishman. Fifty mile to de grub."

"If we have any luck," muttered Jimmy, "We've got to have a little luck."

"By gosh, you bet. Bot den of course at de same time, ve need even-break. Come on, vild Irishman."

There were no preparations to make; nothing to take with them, except their blankets. The blizzard whipped into them and the snow particles stung and cut like ground glass, but they headed into it, traveling in single file that they might not lose each other.

Straight over the divide they struggled; two men who looked like shadows in that gray whirl of the elements. But even the long climb did not warm their blood. There were no landmarks to follow. Everything was blotted out at a few feet distance and they did not realize that they had crossed the divide until the mountain sloped downward again.

And here a new trouble assailed them. The ice-like snow had gnawed the lacing of their snow-shoes into shreds, and the crust was not strong enough to hold them up without the shoes. There was no chance to repair them; so they went blindly on.

Mile after mile they floundered down the timbered slopes, praying for a break in the gray shroud that they might get their bearings; but the break would not come.

Night overtook them, but they went on. It was their only hope. Neither of them knew where they were, nor in which direction lay the cache, but they were trusting to luck to carry them through.

It was a hundred miles from the cache to Dugout City, they had estimated, and the cache would furnish them plenty of food for the hundred mile trip.

Then the last strands of Jimmy's snow-shoes parted. Lars' shoes were only good for a short distance more, and there were many miles of snow ahead of them.

And, as if in celebration of this last misfortune, the blizzard took on a new lease of life and fairly blotted them out in a maelstrom of whirling snow. Gone was all sense of direction, but they went on. Lars' snow-shoe webs parted company with the bows, but he floundered on, with Jimmy following him blindly.

There was no chance for conversation. It was merely a case of flounder ahead, fall down, get up and keep going. And it was thus that Fate drove them almost into the snow-piled side of Ng Loy's little cabin at the forks of Trinity Creek.

If the cabin had been a hundred feet farther on, Ng Loy would, in all probabilities, have found them in the Spring, when the snow went off for its short vacation from Trinity Creek.

But Fate caused them fairly to collide with the side of the cabin—or rather the roof, because the snow was piled high about Loy's habitation—and he found them just in time.

IT WAS several hours later that Jimmy awoke, swathed in blankets, in a warm cabin, and to his nostrils came the savory odor of simmering mulligan. Slowly he emerged from his blankets —his head did—and he looked straight at the wrinkled little Chinaman—who was watching him.

Jimmy's face was raw from the frost and he ached in every muscle and joint, but his eye was clear. There was frank amusement on his face and his voice was husky as he said—

"Sure now, and where is Saint Peter?"

"No *sabe*." The old Chinaman shook his head. "Why fo' yo' want him?"

"I've got to find him," Jimmy shook his head slowly. "I've no doubt he mistook me nationality and sint me to a Chinese heaven, don't ye see?"

Loy's wrinkled face broke into a grin. He was not without his sense of humor and he knew what Jimmy meant.

"This no be heaven. This Tlinity Cleek, yo' sabe?"

"I've no doubt ye think that, me friend," said Jimmy seriously, "but it's the nearest thing to heaven I've ever seen. Is me pardner no worse than I am?"

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"No much bad. Pletty bad sto'm. I hear you bump my li'l cabin."

"Pretty bad storm! Sure, I hope I niver see a worse. Hey! Lars! You cock-eyed Swede, wake up, will ye?"

Came a movement under the Swede's blankets and his face emerged. He stared at Loy in a stolid sort of a way; blinking his eyes wonderingly. Then he caught sight of Jimmy.

"Halo dere! Where in de —— are ve, Yimmy?"

"Right here, Lars," Jimmy laughed joyfully. "We bumped into the Chinaman's cabin and he hauled us inside."

"By yee, dat was close call!"

The Swede grimaced with pain from his frost-bites and sniffed audibly.

"Yo' lik' soup?" grinned Loy, pointing at the black kettle. "Li'l piece car-boo, some onion, potato—ver' nice."

Jimmy started to struggle out of his blankets, but the Chinaman stopped him.

"Yo' stay in bed. Long time yo' ve'y sore; yo' *sabe?* I bling soup. Li'l bit now, li'l bit bimeby. Yo' too hungly."

"You been assayin' me while I was asleep," complained Jimmy. "Nobody could tell I was too hungry. And it's a lucky thing ye had plenty of blankets."

Ng Loy nodded quickly.

"Yessah. Need plenty blanket. Chinaman get old, get ve'y chilly. I buy some blanket, trade fo' some blanket, yo' *sabe?* Bimeby I have plenty blanket—jus' right."

Ng Loy brought them tin cups of the hot mulligan. It warmed them up and put new life into their bodies. They begged for more, but Loy was adamant.

"No can do. I sabe yo' ve'y hungly—too hungly. Bimeby I give yo' mo'. Too much now—plenty sick."

"I niver thought that a Chinaman could keep me from me food," wailed Jimmy, "but I suppose I've got to keep me timper. What's your name?"

"My name Ng Loy."

"Thasso? And how do ye spell the first half of it?"

"How spell. Jus' same like N.G. Make sound 'Ing.'"

"Now, who the —— iver gave ye that name. N.G., is it? Ye are not! In this country, Loy, they say anythin' is N.G., when it's no good."

"Mebbe so Ng Loy no good."

"The —— ye say! Not to me they don't say it."

Loy smiled softly and stirred the soup.

"Ay know how das happen—" Lars shook the blankets off his head—over in das China country they read and write everyt'ing oopside down und backvards, Yimmy."

"Sure, and that's a fact, Lars. He's N.G., with the reverse-English. Whin do we eat again', Loy?"

"Bimeby."

Loy's cabin was very small, with a big fireplace which warmed it well. There were two bunks built into the sides of the cabin, the rear of which was piled high with wood. There was little room to move about, and the furniture consisted of a small, crudely-built table and one chair.

"You minin', Loy?" asked Jimmy.

"Yessah, li'l bit mine. I come hea' las' Summa. Cabin not much good, I fix up nice. I got mine claim hea'."

"Show anythin', Loy?"

"Pletty good show. Splingtime, I make money. Where you flom?"

Jimmy tried to explain the location of their cabin, but Ng Loy had never crossed the divide.

"Yo' locate hea'?" he asked.

Jimmy grinned and looked across at Lars. It was a novelty to find a miner who was willing to divulge the fact that there was pay-dirt in sight.

"I dunno," Jimmy shook his head.

"Two fork hea'," explained Ng Loy, holding out his hand, with two fingers spread.

"I plospect plenty, but nobody dig hea'. Mebbeso one fork have pay-stleak, mebbe so two fork. You tly. I catchum gold my claim. Gold come down stleam, I t'ink."

"You want us to locate on the forks?" queried Jimmy.

"Yessah. Be good, I t'ink. Claim below me, mebbeso good. Nobody tly."

"Well," Jimmy settled back on his blankets, "you come near bein' plumb white, Loy. We'll oufit and come back."

"Ay t'ink ve bane lucky," observed Lars thoughtfully.

"Luck?" Ng Loy smiled softly. "Yes-s-s, luck."

He stepped over to the table and picked up a little white object, holding it in his open palm.

"This is luck," he said slowly. "Today

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I make an old Chinese prayer to the white elephant. It was for evelybody in storm; yo' *sabe?*"

"Ye say ye did?" Jimmy's eyes gleamed with interest. "What did ye say the thing is?"

Ng Loy held it out in his hand—a little, carved ivory elephant.

"And ye prayed to it?"

"Yes. Li'l white elephant of old China. Good luck."

"Ay betcha das right," nodded Lars solemnly. "Somet'ing bring us hare, Yimmy."

"By golly, that looks like good luck," breathed Jimmy. "The white elephant brought us out of the snow."

"It is more than good luck," said Ng Loy slowly and in perfectly good English. "The owner will in some way bring happiness to others. Good luck and happiness."

"Some elephant!" exclaimed Jimmy. "By golly, I'd like to have one."

"Ay like dat, too," nodded Lars.

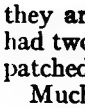
Ng Loy smiled and placed it on the table.

"Mebbeso bling good luck to all."

"Why do you speak good English sometimes and then pidgin-English, Loy?" asked Jimmy.

"I fo'get," smiled Loy. "I been this country long time. I study English to talk like American. Sometimes I no can do—like now; yo' sabe?"

"Like I mix in Irish brogue, I reckon," smiled Jimmy. "But when do we eat agin', Loy?"



TWO days later Lars and Jimmy started for Dugout City after grub. The storm had broken the night they arrived at Ng Loy's place. Ng Loy had two pairs of old snow-shoes, which they patched up with rawhide strips.

Much to their amazement Loy handed them a poke of gold to pay for the food.

"We are partners," he declared and refused to take back the money. Then he gave them the white elephant.

"Long ways to go," he declared. "Mebbe so big snow come—yo' need luck. White elephant bling yo' back to Ng Loy."

"By ——, you're a white man!" blurted Jimmy. "We'll sure come back, partner."

And it was three days later that they arrived at Dugout City, after a hard trip. Dugout consisted of a few log cabins, almost buried under the drifts, where the inhabitants holed up for the long Winter, with nothing to do but to eat, sleep, drink and gamble.

One building was used as a store. It was well stocked with supplies, but prices were almost prohibitive. Dugout City welcomed Jimmy and Lars with open arms. Any strange face was welcome in Dugout City in Winter.

It was the one community center in all that vast district, and the meeting place for all the sour-doughs for miles around. Jimmy and Lars bought their supplies first and became sociable afterward.

Ng Loy's poke of gold was lighter by half when the purchases were over, but that lighter half was enough for their amusement and comfort.

The saloon was a small cabin, unventilated, where the miners crowded in until there was hardly room for the short bar and the one roulette wheel. Even the poker-table occupied so much room that it was advisable to shove one side of it against the wall, so cutting down the possible number of players by at least two.

In there was the reek of stale liquor, the stifling smoke from many strong pipes, and the varied smells of humanity; but to Jimmy and Lars it meant liquor and cards, something which had been denied them for a long time.

There was a vacant seat at the poker-table and room for another at the whirling roulette wheel. Lars settled heavily into the poker-seat, while Jimmy looked on and grinned.

And twenty-four hours later, Lars and Jimmy walked out into the below-zero air, with the accumulated wealth of Dugout City in their sagging pockets.

Their luck had been phenomenal. Dugout City was broke, and it would be many moons before there would be enough gold in the camp to pull off a decent-sized poker-game. Neither Jimmy nor Lars were gamblers. It was just simple, unadulterated luck—and they knew it.

They not only had all the gold of the camp, but Jimmy had won a dog-team from "Mukluk John," a well-known musher. They had snow-shoed in with Ng Loy's gold, bought a grub-stake and were going back in dog-team style, with their pockets lined with gold.

As they started to pack their grub on the sled, Lars grunted and straightened up as if with a sudden idea.

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"What is it, Lars?" queried Jimmy, looking back.

"Ay just remember, Yimmy. All das luck."

"That white elephant?" exploded Jimmy, searching frantically through his pockets and finding it in the last one to be searched.

"Ay tank das bane luck," declared Lars, grinning widely.

"Jist as sure as there's a banshee in Ireland."

"Ay forgot it." Lars was almost apologetic.

"Sure ye did—and so did I. But the elephant didn't forget, Lars. We're lucky ——, so we are."

The weather held fine for their homeward journey and Ng Loy welcomed them with a smile and a mulligan stew. He listened closely while they told of their good luck and gazed in amazement at the gold they brought back with them. He fondled the little elephant for a while, but placed it back in the center of the table.

"Plenty good luck for t'lee," he declared. "Bling plenty happiness sometimes—I hope."

Lars and Jimmy had been inseparable for years, and now it looked as if Ng Loy was going to make the third member of the team.

"We're a fine layout," declared Jimmy. "A Chink, a Swede and a Mick. Sure it's a ——'s own mess and there's little choice I'm thinkin'."

"Perhaps it is the will of the gods," smiled Loy.

"That's right, Loy; blame it on the gods. Why don't ye blame some of it on the elephant?"

"Ah, yes, perhaps."

"Ay tank you better not speak bad of de elephant," warned Lars.

"Nor of the gods either, I'm thinkin'," grinned Jimmy.

"Do you believe in gods?" queried Loy.

"Jist one," said Jimmy seriously. "Lars had a lot of 'em. Get him drunk and he rumbles about a feller named Thor. Loy, that cock-eyed Swede thinks that a feller be the name of Erickson discovered this country."

Loy smiled softly and put more wood on the fire.

"We all must have some gods," he said. "Something to look up to. It is not good to look down all the time."

"I s'pose. What is your idea of heaven, Loy?"

"Friendship."

"Friendship, eh? Sure, that's a queer idea. And what do ye think is hell like?"

"Losing that friendship."

Jimmy laughed and sucked on his old pipe. It was a new angle with him.

"There is little worth while, except love and friendship." Ng Loy was speaking good English now and was very thoughtful. "Love and friendship smooth the paths of life. Lose love and friendship and the path becomes very rough. If you love everybody, the world is filled with flowers and the song of birds; if you hate everybody, the world is dark, there are no flowers, except those of cruel thorns, and the song of the birds is like the croaking of buzzards."

"Yes, that's right," admitted Jimmy. "You talk like a man who knows, Loy. Have you ever hated?"

"Yes, I have loved and hated, my friend. Ng Loy is very old in years and old in experience. Some day I will not be here. You wonder why I dig for gold? You wonder why I want much gold, when I will not be here long?

"You smile when I tell you that I wish to die in my own land. The Ng family are very old in China, and it is my wish to have my bones beside that of my ancestors. Queer, is it not?"

"I've heard of it," nodded Jimmy. "Somethin' about the rest of the family bein' disgraced if ye don't hole up with 'em. Is that it?"

"That is near enough. There are things that would sound queer to you, but to me they are not queer. I am of a different race and my thoughts are not your thoughts."

"That's right," Jimmy agreed quickly. "Now you take this Swede pardner of ours, Loy. He sees things different than we do."

"Ay betcha," nodded Lars sleepily. "Ay am Swede—de best peoples in de vorld."

"Bunch of white-haired snuff makers!" snorted Jimmy. "Let's go to bed."

And contrary to general belief, these three men remained friends, even though confined to the one cabin during those long Winter days. While the blizzard howled across the Trinity and the world seemed a smother of snow, the two white men sat and listened to the philosophy of Ng Loy, or argued questions which neither knew anything about.

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Then came a day when the warmer winds moaned in the tall trees and the huge drifts moved jerkily, as if some giant were moving under his monster counterpane. The Chinook was at Trinity Creek. The huge slides rumbled down the steep mountains and the water hissed down the forks of the creek, past the cabin, as if trying to make up for the time lost in Winter.

The landscape changed hourly. Bushes, held down by a weight of snow, snapped upright like a jack-in-a-box; the jack-pines shook away their covering and stood forth in black blotches, where had been only a white expanse; and here and there ledges of rock appeared, as if looking out to see what had happened to the world during the Winter.

Lars and Jimmy located on the west fork of the creek and included Ng Loy's name in their notice. It was still too early for active operations as the ground was frozen too hard; so they began enlarging Loy's cabin, making it big enough for all three.

Then came another storm and more freezing weather, as if the elements were only joking and had no intentions of letting Spring hold sway for a long time to come.

"Sure, and it may be a good omen," declared Jimmy. "It strikes me that this would be a good time to make a trip to Dugout City and bring in more grub. It will be harder when the snow is gone and we can't use the dogs."

"Ay betcha das good idea," agreed Lars. "Ve go now, because dis not last long."

Ng Loy agreed that this would be an opportune time; so the next morning Jimmy and Lars pulled out of Trinity Creek and drove straight for Dugout City. There was no talk of drinking nor gambling this trip.

Dougout City was in the throes of Spring outfitting and had no time for games. The Winter was about over and the prospectors were hurrying to break ground as early as possible.

Jimmy and Lars outfitted quickly, swung their team around and headed north. There was a soft feeling in the air and they did not want to run into a Chinook, which would make snow-shoeing and sledging almost impossible as the snow packs quickly.

On the sixth day after their departure from Trinity Creek they were back again. The last few miles were made over a wet snow and they entered the cabin just ahead of a rain storm, which cut the snow and ice like a knife.

Ng Loy seemed very grave, as Jimmy enumerated what they had brought back.

"We're all set for a big season, Loy. We'll take out a lot of money, old timer."

"Yes, my friend. Did you bring the elephant safely back home?"

"The elephant?" Jimmy scratched his head wonderingly. "Why, I didn't have no elephant, Loy."

Jimmy turned and looked at Lars, who was pulling off his boots. Lars gawped open-mouthed at Loy.

Loy smiled depreciatingly.

"It is no matter, my friends. Let us forget it."

"Huh!"

Jimmy snorted and searched the tabletop, on which a flea could not have hidden itself.

"No, it is not there," said Ng Loy. "It was gone after you left. But it doesn't matter."

Lars said nothing, but his beetling eyebrows seemed to draw down over his deep-set eyes, as if unable to think beyond a certain point. Jimmy's mouth lost its habitual grin and the muscles of his jaw bulged as he gripped his pipe-stem. Ng Loy laughed and joked incessantly, but his words were lost on his hearers.

Suddenly Jimmy got to his feet and walked over to where Lars was sitting on the edge of a bunk.

"Now, you —— cock-eyed Swede, give up that elephant!"

Lars peered at him, his mouth twisting nervously.

"Give it up, you thief!" roared Jimmy.

"Ay give up not'ing!"

Lars heaved his huge bulk off the bunk, only to jerk back from Jimmy's smashing blow which caught him on the side of the head.

"Tryin' to hog the luck, were ye!" growled Jimmy.

But Lars did not speak. He swung forward, hunched low and smashed at Jimmy with both hands. Lars was slow, awkward, but his blows were like the smashing of a pile-driver weight.

Back and forth across the little cabin they surged, smashing, cursing, growling like grizzlies. Both men were getting badly hurt. Neither used any science; only brute strength. There was no blocking of blows.

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Every punch went straight to its mark unhampered.

The walls, the blankets were spattered with gore. Loy begged and pleaded with them to stop, but his words fell on deaf ears. He finally climbed to the top of a bunk, where he crouched like an idol, but winced every time a smashing blow found its mark.

Flesh and blood could not stand such punishment for a great length of time. Both men were blinded, choked with blood, until their blows flailed into empty air and they went down on their knees, still striking, mouthing curses.

Lars toppled over and was still, while Jimmy rested on his side, propped up on one elbow, blind as a bat, but still anxious to fight. Loy bathed their heads and bound up their cuts, and they endured it in silence.

"Be friends," begged Loy. "It was nothing to fight over."

But neither man would speak to the other. Their fight had proved nothing; given neither any satisfaction. Loy pointed out this fact, but neither man would agree. All Jimmy would say was—

"I'll never speak to that cock-eyed thief agin'!"

"Ay hope you never speak," said Lars through swollen lips. "Bot at de same time, if you do, I not speak back."

And thus ended the partnership of Lars and Jimmy. After years of sharing the same blanket, going through thick and thin, fighting each other's battles—they broke friendship over a little elephant carved from yellow ivory.

And a sadness of heart drove the smiles from Ng Loy's wrinkled face. Lars gloomed by himself; a great brooding figure, who spoke rarely. Jimmy lost his optimistic outlook upon life, and blamed it all upon the sinister influence of the little elephant.

Spring came in earnest and the warm weather thawed deep into the earth. Lars packed up his part of the food, strapped it on his back and went up the east fork of the creek, went away without explanation or a good-by to any one.

Ng Loy shook his head sadly and watched Jimmy take his pack and head for the claim on west fork. It was the parting of the ways for Jimmy and Lars. Ng Loy went back to work on his crude sluice-boxes, tearing with weak efforts into the gravel, to get enough money to enable his old bones to lie beside those of his ancestors.

It was a month later that Jimmy came down to see Ng Loy. They talked little as they smoked in the doorway of the little cabin, but before Jimmy departed he laid a heavy poke of gold on the table.

"You split it three ways, Loy."

"T'lee ways, Jimmy?"

"Sure. A third belongs to you and a third to——"

Jimmy jerked his thumb toward the east fork mountains.

"Mebbe so he not come back."

"Ah, ye bet he'll come back, Loy. He knows that I'm honest and he'll come back to git his share. See ye later, Loy."

Loy stood in the doorway and watched Jimmy disappear in the timber. Loy knew that deep in Jimmy's heart was a dead, dull ache for the companionship of his old partner.

"Friendship is heaven," mused Loy sadly. "Perhaps they did not believe Ng Loy's creed. It was heaven for Ng Loy, too; but it is heaven no longer."

Two weeks later Lars mushed in, with the muck of the creek on his clothes. His face appeared drawn and tired and there was a hunch to his big frame that had not been there before.

"Ay locate on small creek," he told Loy slowly, "and Ay cut de pay-streak. Hare—" he tossed a poke onto the table—"you divide, Loy. Ay locate you and Yimmy on de claim."

Loy smiled softly. He knew that the slow-moving Swede was eating his heart out for the companionship of Jimmy, but was too bull-headed even to admit it to himself. He told Lars about Jimmy bringing in his clean-up, and gave Lars his share of the gold.

Lars squinted over it, like a huge ape which had found something he did not understand. Then he stowed it away inside his shirt and went back up the creek. Loy smiled and went back to his work.

A week later Jimmy came down to see him, and sat down beside Loy who was stripping a small piece of bed-rock.

"I kinda got pleurisy," explained Jimmy, "so I knocked off work for the day. Loy I ain't been feelin' well for a week."

Loy took him up to the cabin and gave him his share of Lars' gold.

"I'll not take it!" exploded the Irishman.

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"I'll not soil me hands with that cock-eyed Swede's gold."

"He took his share of your gold," said Loy.

"He would. He'd take everythin' that ain't nailed down."

Loy said nothing, but puttered around, getting a meal.

"Ye told us about that elephant once," said Jimmy thoughtfully. "What was it ye said about it bringin' happiness, Loy?"

Loy smiled softly and shook his head,

"Only to the owner is it a charm. Good luck it might bring to any one, but the owner of it will in some way bring happiness to others."

"I understand," thoughtfully. "But stealin' don't make for ownership, Loy."

"No."

"It's still your elephant, Loy."

"Yes. No matter who has it—it is still mine, Jimmy."

"By golly, it was a fine elephant, so it was."

"It is," corrected Loy softly.

"That's right. May the —— fly away wid that cock-eyed Swede for takin' it. He wanted to hawg all the luck, so he did."

"Has it brought him luck?"

Jimmy frowned thoughtfully. He knew that the elephant had not brought Lars any luck.

"Bein' a thief kinda cooks your luck, Loy."

"Yes. Honesty is a good luck charm, Jimmy."

"Sure, you're a queer Chink, Loy. You're honest as —— and ye've some queer ideas of heaven and hell, but, I dunno."

"Because I believe that there is heaven in friendship?"

Jimmy shook his head slowly and looked straight at Ng Loy.

"No, Loy; that part of it is true—Gospel true."

"And to hate is to suffer torture, Jimmy."

Jimmy got to his feet and stowed away his pipe.

"Well, I'll be goin' now, Loy. So long."

IT WAS several days later that a lone prospector came mushing up the creek and stopped at Jimmy's claim. He was heading across the divide, but stopped to relate what news he had of the Outside.

"Did ye see the Chink down at the forks?" asked Jimmy.

"I seen the cabin, but there wasn't any one around there. The door was open, but the cabin looked kinda like nobody had been in there for a few days. Yuh know what I mean—dirty dishes and all that."

"Sure, that's queer," observed Jimmy. "Ye say the door was open?"

"Yeah. I looked in. Yuh know how a place looks when folks has been away a few days."

They talked about other things and as soon as the man had gone, Jimmy knocked off work and went down the creek, wondering what had happened to Ng Loy.

At the open door he met Lars. It was their first meeting since Lars had left the cabin, but there was no sign of friendship in their attitude toward each other.

"Where's Loy?" growled Jimmy.

"Ay don't seen him," Lars shook his head.

Jimmy turned and went down to the cut where Loy had been digging, with Lars stumbling along behind him.

And there they found Ng Loy. The Spring thaw had loosened the roots of a big fir-tree on the slope above the cut and under this fallen monarch they found Ng Loy. He had been dead for at least two days.

"By gosh, das hard luck!" breathed Lars sorrowfully.

Jimmy looked at Lars, his eyes filled with tears.

"Hard luck, ye say? Who gave him the hard luck, I'd like to know. Ye stole his luck, ye cock-eyed Swede!"

Lars shook his head, like a wounded buffalo, and hunched close to Jimmy.

"Das lie! You steal de luck yourself."

"Me!"

Jimmy fell into a fighting crouch, his big hands opening and shutting spasmodically.

"Ye take that back, or I'll massacree ye, Swede. Ye stole the luck of the whole creek when ye took that elephant."

But Lars shook his head and glared at Jimmy.

"Ay don't want for to fight you," he said slowly. "Ay am tire' for fighting. You go way."

"Me go away? And why in the —— should I go away?"

"Ay am feex up de poor Chink—me. Ay take him to de coast unt ship to China."

"Oh, ye would, would ye? Ye would

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steal his luck and then ship him to China, would ye? Well, I'm tellin' ye that I'm goin' to do that, Swede. Hands off, that's what I say to ye; and I'll tend to me friend's remains."

Jimmy turned, picked up Ng Loy's ax and began cutting away the tree. Lars stood dumbly aside and watched him work, but when Jimmy had severed the trunk of the tree, Lars stepped in and helped him lift it aside.

"I don't need yer help," assured Jimmy hoarsely. "Pick up yer heavy feet and go home."

"You can't do dis all alone," declared Lars. "It be a long ways to de coast. Better we make box unt bury him until de snow come."

Jimmy mopped his brow and considered Lars' words. It was a long way to the coast, and he had no way of transporting the body. They could bury Ng Loy now, exhume him after the snow came and take him out with the dog-team.

"W'at you t'ink?" queried Lars.

"Sure, I was goin' to do that," said Jimmy, unwilling to concede the suggestion.

IT WAS a hard job to make the box, and it was nearly dark when it was completed.

"I'll bury him on the point of the hill there by the big rock," said Jimmy.

Lars secured the shovel and pick, but Jimmy demanded that he be allowed to do the work. Lars followed him up the hill and stood aside, while Jimmy cleared away the débris from beside the big rock.

He wanted to place the box as close as possible to the outcropping of granite, beside which was a pile of loose branches, moss and the accumulation of years. Swiftly he yanked this aside with the point of his pick, using it as a rake.

As he started to drive the pick into the dirt, he stopped with the pick raised above his head. He held the pose so long that Lars grunted wonderingly and started forward.

Then Jimmy dropped the pick behind him and fell to his knees, his right hand open, fingers spread, as if afraid to pick up what he had seen.

"Lars!" he croaked thickly. "Will ye look and tell me what ye see? Look man, for the love of God!"

Lars stumbled ahead, crouching almost to the ground. His lips worked soundlessly as he stared at the débris.

"Do ye see it?" breathed Jimmy.

"Ay see dat elephant," said Lars foolishly.

With a swift, clutching movement, Jimmy sprang to his feet, holding the ivory elephant. He staggered back, as if afraid some one might try to take it from him, holding it close to him in both hands.

"Das —— pack-rat nest," said Lars.

Jimmy lifted his eyes and looked across at Lars, and for a space of about ten seconds they stared at each other.

"You cock-eyed Swede!" shouted Jimmy. "You didn't steal it!"

Lars shook his head and a smile flashed across his face.

"Nor you didn't, you wild Irishman! By gosh, I'm glad!"

Together they sat down and examined the elephant, as if they had never seen it before. They did not shake hands nor offer any apologies. But they both knew.

"It was good luck, Lars—" Jimmy turned his head and looked square into Lars' eyes—"but there must have been a lot of evil in that —— pack-rat. Loy said it was only good luck to its owner, but I dunno.

"Loy still owns it, Lars; so we'll bury it with him, if ye don't mind."

"Dat be best," nodded Lars. "Ve bury it with Ng Loy."

For a long time they sat on the side of the hill, while the long shadows stretched down across Trinity forks and threw the little cabin into a blend with the dark of the fir forests beyond it.

They did not talk. It was if they were resting after a long, long toil. Lars' huge hands were locked over his knees and on his big face was an expression of wonder.

"If Ng Loy was only here," said Jimmy.

"Ay vould like dat," said Lars. "You betcha Ay vould like dat, Yimmy."

"And do ye remember he said that the owner of the elephant would bring happiness to some one, Lars?"

"I vonder 'bout dat, Yimmy. If he don't die ve don't find de elephant—unt never be happy."

"Ye said it, Lars. Fate works in queer ways."

And they went down the slope in the twilight—partners again.

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WHEN *the* GODS FAILED

A Complete Novelette by J·D·NEWSOM

Author of "The Jade Ax," "In the Rain," etc.

"I'LL BE back in six weeks. If any of you try to get into the store the devils I have unleashed will tear the eyes from your heads and the nails from your fingers, and when I return I'll—you know—" Markley patted his coat pocket all dragged out of shape by the heavy revolver which he carried— "I'll go through the village like the burning breath of old Tcha'a himself. The place is tabu!"

He scowled at the upturned black faces and concluded in his mother tongue:

"That'll keep you steady, my lads. You be good or good night. Get me?"

They did. They assured him that not one of them would even glance at the store. Markley was their brother and their only friend among the white men.

Said old Kureru, the headman—

"For the copra, which is nothing, you give us the matches that light our fires, the cloths we wear and many other wonderful things including the rum that makes men the equals of gods.

"And it is good rum," he concluded knowingly.

Markley stood on the veranda of his store bidding farewell to his customers. Half a hundred or more of them squatted in the sunshine and stared up at him with round, thoughtful eyes. They were quite accustomed to the leave-taking ceremony, which had been faithfully repeated year after year when Markley went to Vila to settle accounts and get drunk.

He was a bull-necked, bull-voiced person, very broad of shoulder and very short of leg. When he sat down he looked like a big man, when he stood up he was quite short; he walked with the roll of a pot-bellied freighter caught in a heavy sea. He wore a cigar in the left-hand corner of his mouth, a cigar that was never alight, always disintegrating, and, apparently, never renewed. It might have been a malignant growth on his upper lip, such was its permanency.

He was the possessor of a fighting face, armed with powerful jaw muscles and a prognathous chin. His nose, which at one time must have displayed at least a tendency to be straight, now wandered erratically down his face, ending in a fleshy, unclassifiable lump. The damage had been inflicted once upon a time by a foolhardy individual by the name of Blavitch in the course of an argument, conducted in an Apia saloon, about the geographical distribution of the bread-fruit tree. Blavitch lost and died.

Markley also owned a scar that ran slantingly across his forehead down to the corner of his right eye. A Kanaka refusing to clinch a bargain, which he called a theft, had wielded a machete with the skill of a novice. He, too, had gone on to some Melanesian Valhalla.

Once there had been a planter on Gurukavo, a mild individual named Trent, but Markley had so frightened him that at the end of eight months' residence he had fled, bag and baggage, leaving behind a

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half-built house and a vague attempt at a garden. After his departure Markley, standing before the ruins, had inquired of the world at large—

"And *now* who's boss of this island?

"Guess it's me, all right," he announced solemnly. "This is my dung-heap."

And so it remained.

Standing there on the veranda of his store, resting knotted hands on the railing, his eyes traveled from landmark to landmark, and he grunted contentedly. The early morning sunshine streaming across the level sea shot long spears of light between the bolls of the coconut-trees lining the beach. At such times even the walls of Markley's store looked clean and neat and well-kept.

Across the bay stood the ruins of Trent's house, its bleaching pillars vividly white against the green background of jungle. And across the smooth surface of the sea, hooting as it came, steamed the mail-boat, unlovely, rusty, battered, but indispensable.

"You understand?" Markley shook a threatening finger at the natives. "Keep off."

"Have no fear," answered Kureru. "The house is tabu—I speak for them all. And may your journey——"

"All right," grunted Markley, who detested demonstrations of affection. "Now beat it."

He gave the padlock on the door one last energetic pull, tested the shutters and rolled down to the beach where his servants awaited him. His tin trunk was already in place, balanced across the narrow bulwarks of an outrigger canoe.

"*Hee—lo—haa!*" sang the paddlers as their blades took hold of the water.

His vacation had really begun. Markley pulled his panama hat far down over his eyes and his jaws worked steadily at the cigar end.

But when the canoe was half-way up the bay, he suddenly pushed back his hat and thrust his head forward while he glared in wonder at the steamer now anchored just beyond the bar. With a screech of rusty blocks a boat had been lowered from its deck.

"What the ——," growled Markley. "Who the —— is coming here?"

The boat pulled away from the steamer's side, worked its way through the pass and—

"If they ain't going over to Trent's place!" wrathfully exclaimed Markley. "Didn't they see me? Might think I was scenery."

He barked orders at his paddlers and the canoe raced ashore in the wake of the whaleboat. He saw three men step ashore and, ignoring his shouts, make their way at a leisurely pace toward the dilapidated house.

"Won't wait for me!" he grumbled. "Don't know me! I'll show 'em who's boss of this island."

As soon as the canoe grounded on the hard sand he lumbered off in pursuit, crashing straight through the underbrush, stamping down the remains of a fence and at last came face to face with the newcomers.

He stared at them and they stared back, and his eyes grew round with surprize. The power of speech momentarily deserted him and to cover his amazement he was obliged to extract the cigar stump from the corner of his mouth.

Before him stood Trent, as small and gray and diffident as ever.

"Trent!" grunted Markley. "*Mr.* Trent! What the —— have you come back for?"

"My prop'ty," wheezed Trent. "Got a right to come here if I like. Still mine."

Markley permitted himself to laugh. The little man was as scared as ever. Wouldn't stay long—not he.

"Sure it's yours," grinned the trader. "Glad to see you. Who're your friends?"

"Broke my fence," Trent blurted out with a sudden show of defiance.

"Fence ——! Three sticks and a bit of wire. What's the idea?"

"In fact," broke in one of Trent's companions, a brisk middle-aged man with a gold-rimmed pince-nez, "you are trespassing."

After which statement he relapsed into silence and went on staring through Markley as if Markley were indeed part of the scenery.

"What?" shouted the outraged trader.

"Introduce you," stammered Trent. "This is Mr. Bentick, head of the South Pacific Planters Company."

"Bentick from Suva?" demanded Markley, the cigar again in his mouth.

"Yes," said the owner of the pince-nez.

"Oh," said Markley.

"And this is Mr. Alfred Conway," Trent went on, indicating a tall, ungainly young man. "He will—he is—I believe——"

Now Markley knew all about J. H. Bentick and the power he wielded in the Fiji

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group, but this, argued the trader, was not Fiji, this was Gurukavo in the New Hebrides.

"Well, and what are you after?" he grunted.

Bentick answered him curtly:

"Trent is selling out. We're buying. My nephew, here, is going to run the place. That all you want to know?"

"Trent's selling out?" roared Markley. "Why, the little drowned rat ain't got a right to a —— thing on this island."

"Oh, yes, I have," chimed in Trent, coming out from under cover. "I had my titles endorsed at the colonial secretary's office. It's all in order."

"You don't say?" jeered Markley, sticking out his jaw. "Well, all I've got to say is—better steer clear. I'm running this show."

"I'll help you," breathlessly exclaimed Mr. Alfred Conway. "Between the two of us——"

"And who the —— are you?"

The young man grinned, blushing like a sunset.

"I'm a nephew of the great man," he explained. "You see—" he became confidential and came close to Markley, patting him on the shoulder as he spoke— "you see, my mother married my father in a fit of depression. My father's a hundred per cent. Rotarian, but I'm a citizen of the world and I feel sure that when you come to know me—my broad-minded principles——"

"Keep your hands off me," spluttered Markley.

"Just as you say," Conway rushed on. "So sorry! My enthusiasm sometimes carries me away, but you mustn't be afraid. I assure you——"

"Stop it, Alfred," ordered Bentick. "You're wasting time."

Then he gave his attention to Markley and snapped:

"Right here and now I want to make things clear to you, Mr. Markley. You chased Trent off the island, but that chapter's closed. No more. Not with me. Don't try it. I'm behind this venture. This belongs to the S. P. P. You quite understand? My nephew is going to act as manager. He's got to learn *something*." A touch of desperation seemed to creep into the crisp voice. "But I warn you, if you try any dirty work I'll have you in Vila jail before you can say knife."

"In other words," broke in the irrepressible Conway. "I am the bacterium in the test-tube and you are the scientist. Pity the poor bacterium! Pity——"

"Gore!" ejaculated Markley, studying him with scorn. "You frothy-mouthed mongrel!"

"I must make a note of that," Conway remarked. "'Frothy-mouthed mongrel'—very nice—very pungent."

In the distance the ship's siren hooted dismally.

"And now," snapped Bentick, tapping the ground with his foot, "this has lasted long enough. You weren't asked to join us, Markley. I'll thank you to get out. Mr. Conway will make whatever arrangements he sees fit when he settles here. In the meantime good day to you."

"If I weren't going to Vila—" threatened Markley.

"Going to Vila!" chirruped Conway. "Why, my gallant pi-rut, that's where we're all going! We'll get acquainted on board ship. What fun men have—that's Bernard Shaw. I never can think of anything original until I have a temperature. When I was a little child of three, I can remember quite distinctly——"

Markley, bellowing his helpless indignation, turned and fled toward the beach.

"Don't be a fool all your life," said Bentick, shaking his nephew's arm. "Can't you keep your asinine recollections to yourself? That man is positively dangerous. I'm trying to give you a chance to make good and you have to act like a lunatic!"

"You'll have to be very careful," breathed Trent, trotting along close at their heels. "Markley is more than dangerous. He has killed more men——"

"Fi-fo-fum," commented Conway. "This is a cheerful place. A nice place for a young man. If I die, Uncle James, darling-sweetheart-child, will you see that my poor mother is cared for? I am offering up my life on the altar of big business and it's only fair——"

The siren's bellowing summons drowned his words.

ALFRED CONWAY, in his pajamas, sprawled on the poop-deck of the *Timurui* and played with the ship's cat. It was a harmless occupation but it annoyed the cat, which removed itself to parts unknown in search of peace. Conway watched it vanish into the darkness and

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as he detested undue exertion he remained flat on his back on the deck while he tried to locate the Southern Cross. Though several of his acquaintances, persons with no great astronomical lore, claimed to have located the constellation, Conway's search remained fruitless. He gave it up and at last fell asleep quite indifferent to the fact that he should have been in his cabin reading from "The Coconut Grower," which his uncle had thrust into his unwilling hands.

Alfred Conway was the son of wealthy but quite honest parents. Brought up in an atmosphere conducive to the development of virile money-making manhood, he had stubbornly refused to follow in his father's footsteps or, as he put it, to be bluffed into becoming a wage-slave. This tendency toward erratic behavior gave his parents furiously to think. The result of their cogitations was that Conway was sent to New York, where he was without friends, given work at a desk, and told to sink or swim.

But he declared that he was entitled to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness—and he sank when he waded out of his depth somewhere near Washington Square. He was neither bad nor vicious, but he was interested in original ideas—particularly his own, which for the most part were without doubt original. He made some new friends, also many enemies; the former said he was full of latent possibilities, the latter deemed him mad. He throve on a quasi-intellectual, pseudo-arty, semi-revolutionary diet, and he lost his desk job. So he wrote home that he had at last found his true vocation, and peddled bananas along Sixth Avenue without a license until a magistrate sent him to jail for contempt of court.

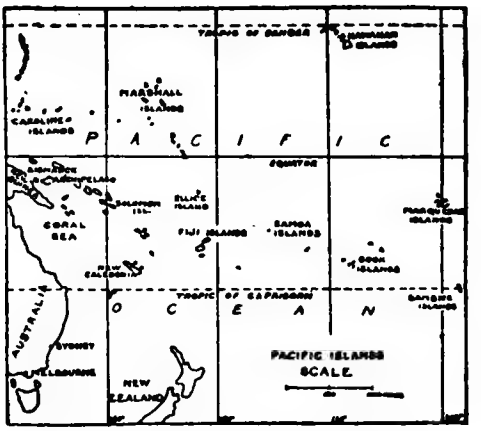
"And I merely told him that he had an ill-filled skull," explained Conway when his father paid his fines. "I didn't say a thing about his brains."

He journeyed back with his parent to Pasadena where a physician pronounced him sane, but, unfortunately, laboring under the delusion that he could sketch.

Catastrophe! No money in sketching. Not decent. Not steady. These artists!

If only he could have drawn pretty pictures he might have found employment with some advertising agency. But he "followed" Picasso—limped after him.

Then Mrs. Conway remembered her brother at Suva and the cable companies reaped a rich harvest for several days.



THE NEW HEBRIDES ARE JUST NORTH OF NEW CALEDONIA

Alfred Conway went to Suva, but the place was too small to hold him. He attended a reception at Government House where he told the wife of an important civil servant that her hair was "the color of wheat beneath a harvest moon." And he tried to smell it.

Fortunately for the peace of mind of Suva the S. P. P. was extending its activities to the New Hebrides and J. H. Bentick hearing of Gurukavo decided to make of his nephew a planation manager, realizing that if the worst came to the worst Alfred could only get killed.

ON THE poop-deck of the *Timurui* the culprit snored on. The night was hot and still, and the steamer's wake was a glowing phosphorescent ripple flowing across the blackness of the sea.

Markley, having satisfied his immediate craving for whisky and quarreled with every man within earshot, left the smoking saloon and wandered aft. Quite by chance he walked on Conway's outflung hand and when the latter expressed surprize he trod on it again for the fun of the thing.

"That," said Conway, sucking his injured knuckles, "is my drawing hand."

"You just try to draw a gun!" fumed Markley, sticking his cigar-decorated face within an inch of Conway's nose.

"I use only a pencil."

"Pencil! What kind of a thing are you, anyhow?"

"Plantation manager of the S. P. P. Soon to be stationed on Guru—something or other. I don't know much about coconuts

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except that they grow on trees and contain a whitish fluid called milk, but if I need advice I'll run over to you——"

"Look here, son, you need a gag," hastily interposed Markley. "You'll get hurt if you keep that up. Get this straight. Any man meddling with my business gets bumped off. Back there, on Gurukavo, the Kanakas know me, they'll do what I say. You try to make 'em do different and I'll turn you out same as I did with that rabbit Trent. Think I've been nursing those niggers for years just to have you come along and upset things?"

"It's a free country," hazarded Conway.

"Free! Like —— it is," raged Markley. "It's mine."

"Amen. So you don't think you're going to like my society?"

Markley caught him by the elbows and shook him.

"I'd like to dust the floor——"

"Deck," corrected Conway. "Deck—always say 'deck' when on board ship. Much more nautical."

With a sudden jerk he broke away from the trader's grip.

"The sandman's coming," he said gravely. "I hear him calling me. See you in the morning."

And Markley stood alone on the deck, his arms still outstretched as if he were clutching a ghost, muttering to himself:

"I'll kill him if he keeps that up. Yes, sir, I'll kill him."

Late the following afternoon they reached Vila. When they were huddled together in the lighter that took them ashore Conway found himself wedged in between Markley and Trent who squirmed miserably at the very thought of the trader's nearness.

Markley frowned and chewed at his cigar, trying utterly to ignore his neighbors, but Conway kept up a running soliloquy all the way ashore.

"The sight of a large city always unnerves me," he declared. "The roar of the traffic——"

"Oh, it's quite small—really," murmured Trent, "just the hospital and the administrative buildings."

"And stores and houses and a native pushing a wheelbarrow. It puts me in mind of New York. Of course it lacks a few mounted cops, but with a little imagination— Ouch!" he concluded abruptly, for Markley's elbow jolted him below the ribs.

"Stop gabbling," ordered the trader. "I'm sick of the sound of your voice."

"Don't make scene," spluttered Conway. "Too public—want look nice go 'shore."

Again Markley's elbow came in contact with his side and he only recovered the power of speech as they reached the landing-stage. He removed his hat and pointed at his tow-colored hair.

"You see that?" he said to Markley, standing full in his way. "Blond beast. Very dangerous. Nietzsche said so."

"Get out of my way," ordered Markley, sweeping him aside.

"See you some more," Conway called out after him. "Don't miss the boat."

Markley rolled away helpless with indignation.

In the back parlor of fat Madame Rivaud's café he should have found relief among men who spoke his own tongue and reduced their conversation to its lowest common factors—wealth, women and whisky. But everything was wrong because his conscience told him that he should have wiped his hands across Conway's face and been done with the whole business. And the day which had been bright and sunny turned to rain with the coming of dusk.

He sat with his forearms resting on the table and explained to the assembled company what he would do to the new manager of the S. P. P. when he went back to Gurukavo.

His acquaintances murmured sympathetically but found him rather dull, and a Frenchman sitting near by tried to turn the talk into other channels.

"It is said," he remarked, "that the new wing of the hospital will cost twenty-three thousand francs."

Markley knew nothing about the new wing, but he was feeling cantankerous.

"Twenty-three thousand francs!" he sneered, his mouth twisted up on one side. "'Tain't worth half that."

"*Monsieur* probably has all knowledge," shrugged the Frenchman indifferently.

"Bet you're supplying the lumber," Markley shot out at random.

It happened to be quite correct and the Frenchman's black beard bristled like the tail of an angry cat.

"Species of an insolent!" he shouted. "Apologize at once. Apologize!"

"Feeling guilty?" taunted Markley.

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"But I appeal to you, *messieurs*. I ask you a little. Must I tolerate this? It is my honor that is attacked!"

"Honor, ——! It's your pocket-book."

The onlookers shifted out of reach. They remained neutral but their moral support went out to the libeled Frenchman.

"You're all right, Gaspinot," shouted some one. "Don't mind him. He's just come out of the wilds and he's——"

"I know more than some folks do," darkly hinted Markley, who knew nothing. "If I had that lumber contract——"

Then Gaspinot arose in defense of his name, his honor and his business, and smacked his defamer on both cheeks. One—one, two! The blows rang out in the stillness. They were loud but lacked lethal effect for they were administered with the palm of the hand. They fell like gentle dew on Markley's monumental jaw.

But he had found the outlet for which his exasperated mind clamored. He sprang at the unfortunate Gaspinot, pounding him with fists like iron. And every blow that smashed into his opponent's face was really a blow at Conway.

The proprietress of the café had no objection to her gentlemen settling their misunderstandings as they saw fit, but she prized her glassware. So she stood in the middle of the muddy path and shrieked for all the police of Vila.

By the time the force arrived Gaspinot had been battered into unconsciousness and Markley was promising death to a dozen men who stood or sat on outlying portions of his own bulky frame.

Properly speaking the affair should have ended there but Gaspinot when he returned from the outer darkness, displayed a legal mind which demanded revenge and rehabilitation. Also he was not without influence.

Markley spent the first shore-going night of his vacation in jail. Eventually he appeared before a mixed tribunal which sentenced him to three months' imprisonment.

The argument for the defense, presented by the accused in person, was that he owned a store, a most perishable store, and three months' enforced absence would ruin him.

The court was not up to date. It said justice came before business.

Markley went to prison.

"HE COMES out today," said Madame Rivaud, "and if he sets foot in here I shall order him out."

But she did not.

When he entered the café some minutes later the look on his face sent her slopping hurriedly into the kitchen where she weakly collapsed, sniveling.

"He is terrible. *Quelle tête! Mon Dieu, quelle tête il a!* He will do a bad turn to some one, that is certain."

Again she was wrong.

Markley was quiet, dangerously quiet, and he drank very little. He sat with his forearms resting on the table, his head slightly bowed, busy with his thoughts. After a while he took off his hat disclosing his cropped, round head, and his eyes beneath bushy brows watched for the first faint sign of amusement.

Some one ventured:

"The *Timurui* leaves tomorrow. Going up to your island?"

"Yes," answered Markley, his lips barely framing the word.

"Conway's settling down pretty good, I'm told. The skipper of the *Timurui* says——"

"*All* right," said Markley.

"The skipper says——"

"*All* right."

"But listen. Trenchard up on Nguturo lost all his trees. Wiped out. Rhinoceros beetle again. Shot himself. And the skipper says you want to be careful——"

"*All right*," Markley said again, looking full at his informant, and there was so much latent fury in his whispered words that the speaker drew back with a sudden jerk.

Later Markley attended to his business. Transactions that formerly would have taken days he completed in as many minutes. The next morning he was first to board the *Timurui*.

"He's toned down," hazarded a fellow traveler.

"Toned down," retorted the chief engineer. "He's fighting mad—crazy. Watch his eyes. If he lets loose plug him or he'll get you."

The ex-convict prowled the decks and sat alone, brooding, his calloused hands opening and closing, opening and closing.

Though men avoided him and he made no advances he could not but overhear scraps of conversation. What Conway was doing; who had found Trenchard with his brains blown out; how Conway's overseer,

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a Hindu, was managing the new plantation.

"Never thought this fellow Conway would be any good," he heard a trader from Aurora say to his neighbor at dinner. "Seemed to be all bleat and no brains. But I'm told he's showing signs of intelligence. Queer world!"

"It's Dwarka Nath. He's been with the S. P. P. for years. Why, I remember seeing him when I first went to Suva. I——"

"Sure, I know, but Conway's not so bad. It seems he's opened a store of his own. Gives the Kanakas the next best thing to a square deal."

"Doesn't know any better perhaps."

"He's learning. Pays 'em cash and sells 'em S. P. P. stuff at a profit. I tell you——"

Markley left the table. He wanted to kill, wanted to feel his fist crash into Conway's face, wanted to squeeze Conway's smooth brown throat between his fingers.

He decided to give the intruder forty-eight hours to clear out as he had done with Trent. He hoped that his order would not be obeyed.

All night he paced forth and back along the narrow deck.

Dawn—the familiar hills of Gurukavo rising above the mist, the upturned faces of his servants hailing him from the canoe. He went ashore and the *Timurui* steamed away leaving a wisp of smoke floating above the sea.

Home—stillness after turmoil. The old life again, the old life, but different. Instead of the mob that usually greeted him there was only Kureru sitting on the veranda steps.

"We have waited for your return," said the old man. "Some thought you dead."

He was home indeed! The roll of the old man's words loosened his own tongue and, all at once, he felt that he must have been dreaming, that nothing had happened, nothing changed.

"Did you break the tabu?" he growled cheerfully. "If I find so much as a stick of tobacco missing I'll flay you alive."

"There was no need," explained Kureru. "The white man who rebuilt that old house changed many of our ways. We make copra from the fruit of the trees which he says are his and he pays us money for our work. You were away, what good to us was the money, we said? So he, too, made a place such as yours where he keeps many things ranged on shelves and these he exchanges for the money he gave us for our labor."

"Well, I am back again," snapped Markley. "You bring me your copra and I'll see what I can do for you."

"There is no copra. That other one took all we had."

Markley saw a ray of hope, a means of evening up the score.

"He pays you money," he said. "Bring it to me and I will give you more in exchange——"

Kureru drew two pennies from the folds of his loin-cloth.

"What do you give for these?" he asked.

"Nothing," Markley grunted disgustedly. "Or, yes, perhaps a box of matches."

"*He* will give two boxes for these, or a length of tobacco, or a little sugar—not very much. Surely the new way is better, for we all have this money now, which we may keep or use when we like instead of bartering."

And Markley realized that he was ruined completely and utterly unless, unless—

Down the path, running despite the heat, came Conway waving his arms in sign of greeting long before he came within earshot. At his side hurried Dwarka Nath, watchful and silent, distrustful.

"Welcome home," shouted Conway, leaping up the veranda steps. "Glad to see an honest face again."

All the hatred in Markley's soul leaped to his lips.

"Keep out of here, you ——," he snarled. "Get out!"

Conway wavered.

"Oh, don't say that," he burbled cheerfully. "I want to hear all the news. Things are going fine here. Everybody's happy—join our family circle. We have missed you, you know. The patter of tiny feet——"

Markley went white.

"We'll have a show-down now," he said thickly. "Kureru tells me you've opened a store. You've stolen my trade. But you can't break me. I'll do all the breaking when the time comes. And I told you to keep off. You haven't, so —— help you. I'm through fooling. Either you close that store or I'll run you off the island."

"Let's change the subject," suggested Conway, throwing himself into a chair. "Now what, for instance, do you think of the labor situation in Czecho-Slovakia?"

Kureru after one glance at Markley's twisted countenance betook himself off the

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veranda and hunkered down in the sunshine. He was too old to take an active part in brawls but he was still an interested spectator.

Dwarka Nath remained motionless leaning against one of the pillars.

"Or perhaps you're more interested in the spread of the Muhammadan faith in Africa," Conway went on. "Do you know that Christian missionaries find it very difficult to combat——"

"I'll give you one minute to clear out of here," whispered Markley. "And if you don't close that store I'll shut your funny mouth so tight——"

"I grieve to hear you express such sentiments," sighed Conway, throwing his legs over the chair arm. "We view with concern your rising tide of indignation. Why can't I play with you? You know the slogan: Have you a little competitor on your island this year? I am he or it. Now please——"

Markley had reached the breaking-point. He lumbered forward so suddenly that to gain time Conway was forced to tilt back his chair and roll over on the floor.

Markley roared:

"You ——! I'll kill you for this."

Instead he drew up sharply for Conway though flat on his back had drawn an automatic from his pocket and its blunt nose showed no signs of wabbling off its target. Moreover, Dwarka Nath without apparent haste had whipped a long machete from his sash. He stood poised on his toes, close enough to flash ten inches of steel into Markley's side, far enough away to be out of reach.

"Do I strike?" he asked.

"Don't be bloodthirsty," retorted Conway, jumping to his feet. "No, we don't kill, but I'm much obliged. Put away the cutlery, faithful overseer."

He faced Markley with a cheerful smile on his face, but his voice all at once was as curt as his uncle's.

"Here's the proposition, Markley: The S. P. P. always runs a store for its laborers. I can't close, I don't want to close, and I'm not going to close. That's flat. If your prices are right you're safe—you know that better than anybody. The Kanakas know you, they don't even trust me yet. But I'll make you a fair offer for your stock and trade. That's fair enough. Ample compensation if you want to close shop. Yes or no?"

"Will you get to —— out of here?" snarled Markley. "If it weren't for that —— gun——"

"Never without it," said Conway, dropping back into his normal ways. "Come, faithful overseer, we are not wanted here."

"But don't forget—what I say goes: Close that store."

"Good-by, little Mark," Conway called out. "Come and eat with me tomorrow. The S. P. P. always pays."

Dwarka Nath fell into place behind him and they hurried away, leaving Markley with tears of helpless anger smarting in his eyes.

WHEN a young man, fully initiated into the tribe's most secret rites, sees fit to die of such a trivial complaint as pneumonia, somebody must be practising malignant magic. At least this was the tradition among the people of Gurukavo.

Kureru, returning from Markley's store with a fund of small talk, found a brawny youth named Pambwari stretched out in front of the huts, complaining that a devil was filling his lungs with fire and burning his strength away.

"*Kol*" exclaimed Kureru. "But he was unafflicted this morning. I saw him go off with the others to work for the new white man."

"He dragged behind," sobbed Pambwari's bride of a month. "He coughed in the night."

"The word of a woman," grunted old Kureru. "I cough every night——"

"The white man's servant who wears a cloth bound around his head," gasped Pambwari, "two days gone by—when I coughed—he gave me a white powder—to cure me, he said."

"Ha!" said Kureru, and the people shuddered and peered over their shoulders into the gathering shadows.

All that night doctors worked on the sick man with charms and prayers and incantations, while the women moaned and the men sat by the fires and talked of awful things.

Pambwari died as the horizon turned from black to gray and the mist off the swamps rolled seaward.

They strapped the corpse with its knees to its chest and its arms bound close to its sides. Four of the dead man's brothers took it out of the village, down a jungle

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path to the grove where the spirits lurked.

There they placed the body on the ground and hid behind bushes waiting for a sign. Should an insect alight or crawl up on the corpse before the setting of the sun it would be plain that Pambwari had not died a natural death, for in such cases the insects were supposed to have been sent by the magician to bear away the victim's soul. The test, of course, was only resorted to when evil practises were suspected.

They waited—and a brown line of ants swarmed up the dead man's back and a cloud of flies buzzed in the staring eyes. The watchers fled as from a thing accursed, chattering with fear. But they dared not enter the village for they were polluted. On its outskirts they halted and shouted out their terrible news.

As the tribesmen took up the cry Markley strode in among them in search of useful information.

Another sleepless night had convinced him that he could not afford to kill Conway, however pleasurable the thought might be. One could not do away with agents of the S. P. P., without, eventually, having to answer disagreeable questions, and the last thing Markley wanted to do was to renew acquaintance with the Vila judiciary. As he put it:

"I ain't going to swing for that cuss. Not me. But if I can't get rid of him my name's not Markley. And," he concluded, justifying his action, "he's got no right to steal my trade, and me in the pen—the —— robber."

He listened to Kureru's tale and grinned, an invisible, cold, merciless grin, and he chewed at his cigar stump with more real enjoyment than for days gone past.

"You are worse than a squealing child," he told Kureru. "I knew Pambwari. What he needed was good tobacco and a mouthful of rum. But there was no magic. No—" he slowly shook his head—"at least I do not believe there was any magic."

Behind the huts the women were lamenting, high and shrill, a gull-like cry that expressed all their chill terror of unknowable death.

"But all the signs were there," insisted the headman. "You know, I have shown you. The slackness of mind and body, a rotting away of the soul——"

"Perhaps," admitted Markley, as if wavering.

Then, abruptly, he dismissed the whole matter, declaring emphatically:

"It is impossible. There are no workers of evil among us—none."

"There is that other white man and his servant."

"Why would they kill one man, and only one? If they meant harm they would take many lives."

The people averted their eyes and Kureru stammered:

"Who knows but they will strike again? We have given our labor, even now Waburu, Savio—" he ran through a score of names—"are working there."

Markley whistled dubiously.

"Shall I send for them?" asked Kureru.

"No, wait. I am your brother and your perils are mine. My Gods are powerful—I go to seek their advice."

"You are our brother," murmured the tribesmen.

"While I am away go about the day's work as if there were no danger, no spells cast in the air."

He went back to his store. From one of the top shelves he pulled a can of weed-killer, bought once upon a time when he had thought of laying out a garden.

Now, there are weed-killers and weed-killers. Some contain much arsenic. These offer unlimited possibilities and a wide scope of usefulness to the inventive mind.

Markley filled his pocket with the powdery stuff and went back to the village, rolling along light-heartedly, the happiest of men.

Even grief can not thrive on starvation. He found the cooking pots simmering over rekindled fires.

His face was grave as he addressed his anxious audience. He looked like a prophet with a dubious past.

"This my gods have told me," he said. "Even they are puzzled by Pambwari's death. But if more men die before dawn tomorrow then, to be sure, there is a worker of magic among us."

"*Aiel*" moaned Kureru. "Can we not find him now?"

"No," answered Markley. "There is no proof yet. Wait for the word."

In that minute he knew that they were fully at his mercy. They believed him, trusted him. He was a white man, yet he proclaimed himself their brother. He was a dispenser of essential things—such as

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matches—and he was in touch with great spirits who whispered their secrets in his ear.

He was so sure of himself, his utterances so definite that they crowded about him as if seeking protection of his shadow.

Women touched him with their fingertips that some of his strength might pass into them. Even the old men, themselves repositories of powerful magical formulæ, huddled close to him, trying to inhale the breath from his nostrils, touching the dust he trod upon.

"Can we do nothing?" implored Kureru. "Must we wait as if bound to a stake?"

"I have promised an answer tomorrow," repeated Markley. "Have patience. But, perhaps, there are beings lurking in the shadows at this very minute—beings that I alone can see."

"You are our brother," urged Kureru. "Save us from such afflictions."

"Then open the way. Let me through. I shall rout them out."

He went from hut to hut, peering into dark corners of roof tops, and the villagers trooped at his heels, terrorized by the expectant look on his face. They became hysterical, dreading yet hoping to see some ghastly supernatural creature.

As he passed from one row of houses to the next Markley came to an abrupt stop by the cooking-pots. He pointed up at the tree-tops, crying:

"There! See it go! In that *nabua*-tree. Stone it!"

While the tribesmen stared and yelled out curses, he stood by one of the open pots—and a thin trickle of whitish powder streamed through a hole in the lining of his pocket.

The savage has an eye for detail, little escapes him, but though there were those in the crowd who saw or thought they saw something drop into the caldron they were far too preoccupied searching the heavens for disembodied spirits to bother about more material things, and the very crudity of Markley's trick assured its success.

"It has vanished," he shouted. "It went straight up to the sky, but," he cautioned them, "it seemed to rise out of the ground, here at my feet. Be careful of all that you do today."

And there were those who declared that they, too, had seen a shadowy thing go flitting through the branches of the *nabua*-tree.

They begged him to stay with them, they would have detained him by sheer force, but he said that he must seek further guidance from his gods and they let him go.

In the night out of the stillness stalked a reaper.

Two women and a baby and four men, shrieked, collapsed, clawed at their bellies—died. And of the four men three had worked for Conway.

AT THE top of the veranda steps stood Markley. In front of him, packed close together, the tribesmen awaited the judgment of the gods. They had fled their village, some to the hills and the high places, some to the stillness of the sacred grove, but the bulk of them placing their faith in Markley had gathered about his store.

Sullen, suspicious, blindly fearing all creation, the broad light of day brought them no comfort. The snap of a twig underfoot, the shadow of a soaring bird might stampede them, but Markley knew his people, knew that their panic would change to red fury as soon as he told them of some living thing they could rend and hack to pieces.

He stood before them, conscious of his new power, pleased to hold them a while longer in suspense and watch their contorted faces turned toward him. Power! Over a hundred men to do his bidding. He was avenged for the months he had spent in the Vila prison.

And when the outer world heard of the butchery he could point to the gutted house and the rifled store, and lay the blame on the Kanakas.

At last he spoke.

"The signs did not lie," he said slowly, regretfully. "In a dream I saw a white man and a brown one kneeling by a small fire slowly burning images as they whispered charms."

The uneasy shuffling ceased. Here, at last, was something tangible, something they understood. They listened avidly.

Markley went on—

"Thus they will enslave you—a few at a time—unless——"

They took the words from his mouth, thundering—

"Unless we kill!"

Markley pointed across the bay toward Conway's house standing in the shade of trees.

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"Go!" he ordered.

And a howl answered him.

He watched them pound down the sandy track, unleashed at last; then he went indoors, found a pair of marine-glasses and settled himself comfortably where he could best watch events.

He laughed a little; chewing contentedly at his cigar.

"Gore!" he muttered after a while. "It's going to be messy, but I did three months all because of him—let him croak."

The shouts died away. A warm stillness seemed to envelop the island. Blue sky and bluer water, the smooth white sand where the little waves broke, the hills seen between the slender trunks of trees—all these spoke of peace and ease and contentment. But up the beach, a mile away, where it bent around toward Conway's house, a fear-hounded pack was howling for its prey.

Through his glasses Markley caught sight of a white-clad figure go hurrying into the house. A second later a small knot of men came out, paused for what seemed hours, and ran back as suddenly as they had emerged.

"Conway and those coolies of his," grunted Markley, highly amused. "This is as good as a show. Bet they're scared green."

He grunted again, in surprize this time, when the group reappeared, trotted across the patch of lawn and scattered along a hedge. There he lost sight of them.

"They've skedaddled," he chuckled. "Daren't face it. Silly —— fools! Why didn't they bluff it out?"

He suddenly felt quite sorry for Conway.

The black mob was moving more slowly, no longer compact it straggled in a lengthening line in and out among the trees.

The leaders were drawing close to the house. Twenty-odd men running in silence, fists clenched, jaws set, a gleam of crazy blood-lust in their eyes.

The shrill sound of a whistle drifted across the water and a crackle of fire burst from the hedge. Markley suddenly remembered that a ditch encircled the place.

Again the whistle, again the volley—and again. The attack was melting away.

Markley was on his feet, the glasses pressed to his eyes, yelling:

"Wait! Rush 'em all together. Not like that, for ——'s sake, not like that! They'll cut you to pieces!"

The spurts of fire became less frequent but Markley cursed the more for the marksmen behind the hedge were picking off their foes one at a time, choosing not the winded advance guard, but firing into the densest throng.

And the bloodlust gave way to fear, the fear to panic. They had come to seek a creature they could see and touch and mangle—not to face the blast of rifles in the hands of invisible men. They wavered; they heard their wounded shriek; they saw yet another man drop—they fled.

Markley threw down the glasses. His face was bloated with anger, all puffy and red.

"They've got to do it," he growled. "Even if I have to whip 'em up to the doors. The —— fools. Let four guns beat 'em when they could have surrounded the place. It's gone too far, they'll have to get him now. And if they won't then I shall!"

He marched down to the village where the people in a daze shrank from him. The raids of bygone days when they warred with the men of Nguturo they could understand. To have a man, or half a dozen, brought down by the clubs of the enemy was natural, but this helpless slaughter, this killing at a distance was beyond their endurance. Kureru said as much in the desolate stillness of the clearing. Even the women were too numbed to shriek, they hid in the huts, where they crouched, praying for deliverance.

From a group of men wedged together like frightened sheep came a sullen voice:

"He is our brother, he says. Let him deal with this other white man. His gods gave orders, let him obey them."

"It is for your good that I spoke," snapped Markley, quick to sense the danger.

"Our good!" sneered a warrior. "If they could foretell the future, why did they not warn you of the fate that waited us?"

A flood of angry questions poured in upon Markley.

"And why should that white man wish to see us die?" demanded Kureru.

"So that your souls may serve him."

"*Ho!* We thought he needed strong men to do his bidding. Souls can not weed between the trees."

"I tell you——"

"*Aie!* You have told us so much!" exclaimed Kureru. "And even in the days of the *napaveti*—dysentery—there were fewer widows among us."

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"That is so, but the enemy is more powerful. And the ways of the gods are beyond even your understanding, Kureru."

To quell the growing antagonism which he felt about him, he shouted:

"Think! Are you not to blame for the failure? Were the proper offerings made, the prayers uttered before the attack? Do you think you would have failed had you propitiated the spirits as is the custom?"

Still they wavered. They were distrustful of Markley and his gods. Their oracles either promised victory or forbade the undertaking, one of the two, and they were always emphatic, leaving no room for doubt.

"We made no sacrifices," admitted Kureru. "We rushed like children at play, breaking all laws. It is true, we should have offered prayers and made ready as is the custom, worshiping the spirits of great warriors who would have helped us. We failed because——"

"And I remember," shrilled a woman, half-crazed with grief, her breasts all gashed by her nails. "I was on the ground by the cooking-pots and I saw some powder drop from his pocket. *Aiel* and I forgot when he raised the cry that there was a ghost in the *nabua*-tree."

"I saw it too," muttered a man, "as I bent to pick up a stone."

"Wind-blown dust, you fools," Markley snapped at them. "You cowards! You would turn against me—your brother. Cowards! And where are your wounded? Lying where they fell for the worker of evil to slay at his leisure."

The women, thinking of their mates, veered to his side, and Markley subdued the gathering storm. He knew that he was striving for more than revenge, he knew that his own life was at stake, and at last, bullying, threatening, cursing, he silenced even the doubters, but the doubt remained.

"You left your injured behind," he thundered. "You brought about your own weakness. Now pray to the spirits of the dead that they may make you strong."

They obeyed him with reluctance, but when the drums began to beat, when they held weapons in their hands, when their feet pounding the hard ground made a roll like thunder, their courage revived and they swung into the rhythm of the war dance, forgetting everything, even Markley who effaced himself in the shadow of a doorway.

"This," he sighed, "is the real thing. But by —— they nearly got me!"

CONWAY'S mind had never been known to function according to any rational principle. He was either fool or genius, but had not as yet definitely committed himself. In private, however, he occasionally admitted to his drawing-board that he was all fool, which goes to show that genius was latent within him.

Had he been a thoughtful young man, when he saw the onrush of the Kanakas he would have heeded Dwarka Nath's advice and stayed indoors behind strong walls. But he was not a thoughtful young man in the accepted sense of the term. He was an erratic enthusiast and a self-confessed fool.

He marshaled his forces—the overseer and two Fijian boys—threw rifles at them, and in a voice squeaky with excitement told them that what he did not know about warfare was not worth knowing. They did not believe him, did not even understand him until he finally issued orders and shepherded them to the hedge. Even then they might have mutinied except for the fact that it was too late to run.

His tactics were so novel that they succeeded, which is not altogether strange when viewed in the light of more celebrated engagements. The affair lasted not more than five minutes and the victors were unharmed.

Dwarka Nath's enthusiasm knew no bounds. He put down his rifle and grunted:

"No men, no work. *Sahib*, place go to ——. Bentick Sahib he say——"

"Stretcher-bearers," shouted Conway, still too excited to listen to anything but the sound of his own voice. "Stretcher-bearers, gallant lads, let us rescue the enemy wounded."

"Crawl away, back to village," suggested Dwarka Nath. "Black fellow no want help, *sahib*. He stick knife in your belly. I see him once on Kandayu——"

His reminiscences were cut short by Conway who snapped—

"Come on and get those men on the veranda, in the shade, at once!"

And Dwarka Nath perceiving a new and unsuspected Conway with a will of his own, obeyed like the dutiful overseer he was.

When the thermometer stands at one hundred and ten degrees in the shade and the air is saturated with moisture manual

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labor lacks that charm it is said to possess in less enervating climates.

After helping to carry one groaning Kanaka over loose sand Conway reached the conclusion that he was merely hindering more competent men who seemed intuitively to know how to handle two-hundred-pound bodies.

He realized acutely that his physical condition was imperfect.

"Must make a note of it," he told himself. "Setting up exercises every morning and at night, too. Twice a day for sure."

And promptly forgot all about his resolve.

He became a zealous applier of first aid, prodigal in the use of iodine and gauze bandages. His patients whether their wounds were clean holes through the calf or ugly gashes where the bullets had smashed through bone, became great white cocoons festooned with safety pins.

At first, because he was utterly out of breath he found articulate speech quite out of the question and his task absorbed him so much that he viewed the wounded men not as human beings but as cases. For the time being, though his anatomical knowledge was vague in the extreme, he became a surgeon, close-lipped, steady-eyed, transported in imagination to the accident ward of some great hospital where he was curing the apparently incurable. He muttered to himself in a weird jargon of medical terms invented for the occasion.

At last when nine men lay stretched out in a row Dwarka Nath said:

"No more, *sahib*. Him," he pointed to the last man, "him bad."

"What slaughter!" exclaimed Conway. "How many dead?"

"Three. Now—no men, no work—more trouble. What we do? When Bentick Sahib hear——"

"Killed three! Darn shame. Wonder what started the whole thing?"

"No men, no work," Dwarka Nath took up his lament. "What we do, *sahib*?"

"Faithful overseer, you are too conscientious. Have you no soul? Wait until I finish healing—I mean fixing up that man and I'll begin to think. I shall startle you!"

As he knelt beside the last man he drew his breath sharply, dismayed by the havoc the bullet had worked. It had struck high up to the right, smashed its way upward and come out through the clavicle. The shoulder was literally blown to pieces, and the pieces were not nice to behold.

The man was dying, slowly, and the shock had numbed the pain. He lay with staring, questioning eyes that weaved from the red horror of his shoulder to Conway's tense face.

"We'll have you patched up in no time," murmured the latter. "It's a slight abrasion of the duodenum with minor complications. But don't you worry, young fellow me lad, we——"

"You take spirit belong me?" breathed the Kanaka.

"Take what? Don't be so absurd. Here, rest on my arm. Never mind the blood. I want to get this pad——"

"Take spirit—what for?"

"Spirit? No! You're going to live. Live a long time, savvy? The war's over."

"Not want?"

"Certainly not. Think I collect souls or something? You're going to get well, I tell you. Steady there, you're all right now."

"No take when me gone dead?" choked the native. "Man belong nose he go crooked he say you take spirit. He say——"

"Here, Dwarka Nath," called out Conway, "catch what he's saying. I can't handle pidgin-English, but it's something about Markley."

The story came out a word at a time, blending with the death-rattle in the Kanaka's throat. And when he went to his appointed heaven other men took up the telling, checking, correcting each other, some trying to convict Conway and cursing him, others apathetic—recounting without venom what they had seen or heard, for the mere sake of talking.

Dwarka Nath's translation lacked vividness, but it was fairly accurate.

"Pambwia—he work here on south field—he die. Friends say he have bad cough. Black fellow have big chest, no lungs! Friends say he die by magic, not cough. Hunt magician. Markley he come along he say, 'You wait, I find magician.' Like —— he find him! But Markley go store, come back, say he see devil in tree. This man—" he pointed to a Kanaka hit through the thigh— "he see something fall into eating-pot. Say nothing. He say nothing! Fool!

"Well, next day seven go out and one baby. Markley say, 'I said so! It is the

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new man Conway Sahib.' They all come here to get you—and me. Me! Magic——"

The very idea annoyed him intensely. He was a competent foreman, and a hard-headed one, without emotions or feelings, except his admiration for Bentick of the S. P. P., which kept him half-way human. His one aim in life was the acquisition of enough wealth to enable him to buy a few acres of land on the outskirts of Suva where Mrs. Dwarka Nath and their children could live in splendid social isolation.

"I find this Markley," he declared. "*Sahib*, give the order. I put a machete in his——"

"Listen, faithful overseer, we have had enough horrors for one day. Just explain to our friends here that we don't want souls, we want work. Good wages, good food. Tell 'em I'll donate a library if only they'll be reasonable."

A tot of rum apiece convinced the Kanakas that, perhaps, they had been too hasty in their condemnation of Conway. Another made them realize the advantages of working for money as against barter.

"Now what I want to know," said their benefactor, "is how did little old Mark poison those people. Tell me that?"

"They say he spill powder—maybe quinine."

"Dream on, Macduff. You've got another guess coming. Mark is a regular Borgia if you ask me. I'm going to pay him what you would not call a *visite de politesse*. An R. S. V. P., of a visit. Still you are in the dark!"

"*Sahib*, I go along."

"You hold the fort and feed our victims. And if anything happens save my sketches. They're in the portfolio on the desk, packed for instant flight."

"But Bentick Sahib he tell me——"

Conway clutched the Hindu's hands and shook them violently.

"Thank you," he nearly sobbed. "Thank you, oh, my Dravidian brother! I see now how much you love me, but, darn it, stay here and do as you're told. Let me get guns before I depart."

He dashed from the house only to come tearing back, shouting—

"There's a small bit of soap eraser on my desk and two 3-B pencils—save them too."

Then he was under way, giving a good imitation of a fast sprinter. For fifty yards he really believed that he was a runner, but the sand clogged his feet, the automatic in his pocket banged against his hip and he slowed down to a walk.

"Not dignified," he admonished himself. "What would Uncle James say? Must make a note of it. Cultivate dignity."

Dwarka Nath, watching his master march down the beach, allowed himself the luxury of a grin, a slow, tooth-revealing grin, quite astonishing in that morose countenance.

An hour went by. The sun rode flaming across a brazen sky, the breeze died away and the island beneath the raw, white light became an inferno of heat. Out of the heavy stillness there came a sound—repeated again a little louder, faster until it became a rhythmical throb.

The Kanakas stirred uneasily, whispering together.

"What make that noise? Drums?" asked Dwarka Nath.

"Drums, yes. Make dance for fight," they answered.

"Fight us?"

"Maybe—no savvy."

No more was said, but the sullen mutter became oppressive. Even the Fiji boys long in the service of the white man felt the call, even Dwarka Nath, father of children, responded against his will to the wild exultant summons that seemed at a stroke to take men back to the beginning of things when hunter and hunted first faced each other in the sunlit clearing and the hunter hammered his chest with his fists as a sign of his strength—as the gorilla does today.

Then Conway returned, hot, panting, tired, but triumphant. In his hand he carried a can.

"Who said Markley dropped a white powder into the pots?" he demanded. "Who said——"

"*Sahib*," urged Dwarka Nath. "Drums—listen! They make war-dance. They come back—tonight, maybe."

"Wait a minute. Yes, sure, I hear 'em. Can't do everything at once. Not ubiquitous, friend overseer. Had to lock up Mark's servants. Three fellows big as houses. Walked in—gun in my hand—very brave. Couldn't find anything, not a darn thing in his room. Snooped around in the store. Mark wasn't at home. Found this on a shelf. We'll try it on a chicken."

"Chicken——"

"Get me a chicken, I said—fowl, hen, rooster. Go on, beat it!"

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He turned to the Kanakas trying to make himself clear.

"This belong man with crooked nose. Find it in store. See white powder? It kill, you watch."

Five minutes later the chicken was very dead.

"You see!" enthused Conway, very much as a conjurer might strive to impress his audience. "Quite simple. Markley—poison. The evidence is conclusive."

"Why?" demanded a Kanaka. "Why he kill? Why he say you——"

"Again we say 'Quite simple.' Listen, fellows—Markley doesn't like us here. He can't rob you so comfortably. Here, Dwarka Nath, you mangle English better than I do. Spill the beans, explain the situation."

The Kanaka is a little easier to convert to a new idea than the more fortunate races, but not much. Dwarka Nath, however, developed remarkable persuasive powers when once he was fully launched. The dull beat of the distant drums may have acted as a spur, for he dreaded a night attack and his eloquence rose to unforeseen heights.

He delved into island economics and explained how Markley had given the natives a few cloths and a little tobacco in exchange for a great quantity of copra. He told them that they had been robbed and that Conway by paying them money was giving them a chance to buy what they really wanted and was really doing them a favor by allowing them to work for him; which was not even partially true, but it made a good story.

At last one of the Kanakas grunted:

"When can walk—work. We make copra for new master. Tell Kureru quick or he come soon—no time for talk then."

And Conway beamed upon them all and patted Dwarka Nath on the back, exclaiming:

"Splendid liar! Beautiful, stupendous liar. The S. P. P. congratulates you. Thus are businesses built up. The greater the need the greater the lie. Now we go down to the village and settle with Mr. Markley."

"But they kill when they see——"

"Hush! I have matured a plan, my brain has been strangely stimulated by today's rush of business—I mean murder."

Dwarka Nath shook his head when he grasped the meaning of Conway's scheme. It could only have germinated in a marvel-loving mind and seemed wholly impossible. He expressed his disbelief with his usual vigor, but Conway cut him short.

"You see the sun?" he remarked. It is sinking, believe me or not. I have noticed the same phenomenon day after day. When it sinks it grows dark. And we don't want to be caught in the dark, it might be awkward."

WHEN the pounding feet of the warriors began to drag behind the measure of the drums, the high-pitched song of the women, shrill and maddening, spurred them on again. Hour after hour they had danced, swaying, whirling, leaping, moving as one man, blind to fatigue and exhaustion, their faces and bodies caked with dust where rivulets of sweat had carved glistening black channels.

The shadows slowly crept across the open space where they danced. The sun dipped behind the treetops, the burnished hills stood out sharply against the pale blue sky and jungle depths turned black.

Still they stamped to the quickened beat, but Markley who had watched from the very beginning found the performance dull and stupid. He shifted uncomfortably from spot to spot; he belonged nowhere. Neither warriors nor women, not even Kureru noticed him—one purpose held them all.

He found himself cast up on the banks of the torrent of hate he had let loose, a torrent he could no longer guide nor control. Grumbling, he sat with his back resting against the wall of the long hut where the tribe's war weapons were stored. He felt as out of place as a missionary in a Vila saloon. He felt—the cold muzzle of a revolver pressing firmly against his spine just above the coat collar and he heard an ungracious voice telling him to keep his mouth shut and his hands on his knees.

He attempted to turn his head, but the snick of the back-drawn trigger subdued his curiosity.

"Is that you, Conway?" he inquired out of the corner of his mouth. "Say, Conway——"

"Conway Sahib come along soon. No talk, no move or I shoot quick."

"You're the overseer. Now, just listen to me. I tell you——"

"Be still!"

Markley, sensing the unfeigned hostility

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in the voice, fixed his gaze upon the dancers and tried to think—an arduous undertaking in such an environment.

Vainly he tried to attract the attention of Kureru; the headman was far too busy baying encouragement at the warriors.

Then of a sudden Markley gasped and his lower jaw hung slack as his head thrust forward involuntarily. The weapon in Dwarka Nath's firm grasp followed his movement and reminded him of his plight when it collided sickeningly with his seventh vertebra.

He needed reminding, for into the clearing Conway had danced, whirling with an agility a Nijinsky might have envied. In the half-light he became a slender white thing, a flash against the darkening background.

Before the drums could stop, before the women's voices sank to a whisper that rose to a scream, before the stamping feet stood still, he faced the throng and led the warriors in their own dance.

Alone and defenseless he faced them and when they stopped to watch him he danced on alone and laughed in their faces. He held them powerless. And amazement gave way to curiosity, curiosity to awe and fear.

Here was the dealer of death, the worker of evil magic come among them—laughing, unarmed, dancing as they danced!

They gave ground, they were ready to break in panic, but a cry halted them.

"Oh Kureru! We have come back! This is no time to run. Wait and hear us!"

Shriek upon shriek came from the crowd when they recognized the voice of Tambuma, one of the men left behind on the beach. Then the man himself hobbled into the open and with him three others.

The dead had come to life! Their kinsmen rushed forward, touching them, pawing them, laughing and crying, quite forgetting Conway who stood a few paces away watching them.

"Hold back," shouted Tambuma. "This we have to say:

"The new white man has no magic but the magic of kindness. He stopped the bleeding of our wounds and made us whole again. He comes to you now to show you great things——"

A growl answered him.

"Wait!" he commanded. "Who remembers the powder that fell into the cooking-pots the day he of the crooked nose saw the ghost in the *nabwa*-tree?"

"Ha! I saw it—and I saw it!" came the answer.

"That powder brought death. Watch and I will show you. Who remembers this green can?"

He held it at arm's length for inspection.

"*Aie!* It comes from the store," murmured Kureru. "From the top shelf and to the right of the bolt of red cloth. Yes, I know it."

"Now watch," went on Tambuma. "Bring a pig—one of my own—send my brother to get it. And bring me a yam."

Behind the huts, out of sight, Markley was cursing his fate. There was so much hatred in his heart that there was no room for fear. The natives he despised as so much driven cattle, but when he looked at Conway standing at ease among his enemies his whole being shook with uncontrollable anger.

He saw them drag a pig into the clearing, saw them give it the poisoned yam to eat, heard the tribesmen mutter when the brute rolled over in its death agony.

He bided his time with cunning. He waited until the pressure of the gun on his neck diminished ever so slightly as Dwarka Nath's attention wandered, and he threw himself backward, thrusting with all the force of his powerful legs. The gun flew from the Hindu's hand, he tried to ward off the attack but in a flash the trader had him by the neck and was squeezing—squeezing.

Markley strangled him at leisure, grinning savagely as he felt the body beneath him relax. Then he recovered the revolver and just as the first cry was raised against him he came out into the open.

He chuckled when Conway sprang out of reach and he snarled at him:

"Keep still or I'll plug you. By —— I've got you now."

"Kureru," he went on, turning to the headman, "you have doubted my word, you have turned against me. For this there is a penalty."

"*Wah!*" grumbled Kureru. "You drove us against this other white man. It was your magic that killed——"

"I never lie," boomed Markley. "And I am your brother."

"Play fair," broke in Conway. "Speak English."

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"Your turn is coming soon enough," retorted Markley. "I'll fix you."

"Don't forget the S. P. P.," chanted Conway, still with his arms stuck above his head. "I offered you ample compensation in their name. You wouldn't take it, so you're to blame. You see—it rhymes."

Then his voice became quite steady and normal as he added:

"Gee whiz, I'm frightened stiff. Honest I am. And there's a sketch I should like to finish—my faithful overseer on pay-day."

"He's dead," Markley flung at him, snarling. "And you——"

"But we have seen—that powder came from your store," insisted Kureru.

"And you doubt the wisdom of my gods!" retorted Markley. "For the last time hear me. Before he came," he jerked the revolver toward Conway, "there was peace. He came and death came. Now let this be the test. Bare-handed, without weapons we shall fight, he and I. The gods, our gods, will decide."

"But he has not your strength," objected Tambuma. "Empty-handed how can he hope——"

He limped close to Markley as he spoke, too close. A blow on the jaw sent him reeling back.

"It is understood," shouted the trader. "The gods will give the greater strength to he who speaks the truth, and let no man interfere lest he die in his tracks."

The tribesmen grunted their assent. For so many years Markley's word had been law that even now they dare not disobey him.

He thrust the revolver into his hip pocket and slowly wheeled upon Conway.

"You're going to fight me with your bare hands," he laughed. "Fight *me!* Why don't you talk, you mealy-mouthed pup?"

"I made a note of that," cheerfully answered Conway. "But last time you said I was a frothy-mouthed mongrel. My pedigree improves. I told you you'd get to like me——"

The light in the clearing was fading, the tribesmen forming a wide circle were shadowy figures blending with the darkness.

"Fight!" snarled Markley.

"Right!"

Conway landed the first blow full on the trader's mouth and leaped back out of reach. He knew quite well that he was beaten, he was astonished by the indifference of the Kanakas, but he was game.

Slow and heavy and sure of himself Markley forced the fight. Conway struck him again just beneath the heart and he laughed, standing still, his arms hanging at his sides, inviting attack. It came with the suddenness of a hurricane. Conway flew at him and for a second drove him back. But it was the end. Like a hurricane the attack spent itself.

It was nearly dark, above the trees the last red flush was fading out of the sky and in the east there were stars.

Markley's great paw swept up. It caught Conway beneath the chin and dropped him in his stride.

The natives closed in, intent, silent, watchful, and Markley kneeling on the fallen man's chest could hear their quick breathing.

"Conway," he whispered. "Conway, are you shamming? Can you hear me?"

"Let him live," urged Kureru, bending close to Markley's ear. "He fought well."

"Keep back," screamed Markley. "He is mine to kill. Long have I waited! And when he speaks, when he knows that he is to die, then I shall——"

"But," Tambuma broke in defiantly, "he cured——"

"Keep back," Markley repeated, and bending over Conway, he called out:

"Can you hear me? Answer me, you——"

And Conway at last answered him, speaking through puffy lips:

"Don't have to shout. Not deaf. Good ol' Mark always the sportsman."

"You're through," whispered Markley. "Feel 'em about your neck? Feel 'em? Tight and just a little tighter. Nice and slow——"

It was quite dark in the clearing. The tree-tops were black against the sky, all else had faded into the night.

Vaguely above the sound of the blood pounding at his temples Conway heard the purring voice:

"Feel that necklace? It's going to close for good. It's going——"

His gloating whisper changed to a gurgle, his head sagged down slowly between his shoulders until his hair brushed Conway's face—and he collapsed and died with Kureru's spear stuck clean through his back to his heart.

The tribe had taken the judgment out of the hands of the gods.

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Our Camp-Fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. Some whose voices we used to know have taken the Long Trail and are heard no more, but they are still memories among us, and new voices are heard, and welcomed.

We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The *spirit* of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.

But something besides a common interest holds us together. Somehow a real comradeship has grown up among us. Men can not thus meet and talk together without growing into friendlier relations; many a time does one of us come to the rest for facts and guidance; many a close personal friendship has our Camp-Fire built up between two men who had never met; often has it proved an open sesame between strangers in a far land.

Perhaps our Camp-Fire is even a little more. Perhaps it is a bit of leaven working gently among those of different station toward the fuller and more human understanding and sympathy that will some day bring to man the real democracy and brotherhood he seeks. Few indeed are the agencies that bring together on a friendly footing so many and such great extremes as here. And we are numbered by the hundred thousand now.

If you are come to our Camp-Fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There is no obligation except ordinary manliness, no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.

MORE about the disappearance of the buffalo, from the Indian point of view:

Tempe, Arizona.

I notice a short article by Frank H. Huston, entitled "Where Buffalo Come From." I read this article with considerable interest. It led my thoughts back to the Fall of 1885 when I as a young acting assistant surgeon, U. S. Army, was stationed with "A" Troop, 5th Cav., for a short time at Cantonment, Indian Ter. The Cheyennes had been very restless, and the Eastern papers called our little trouble "A Cheyenne outbreak." We had several bands of Cheyennes at Cantonment under our care, and among the chiefs we had Stone Calf, Little Robe, Spotted Horse and White Horse. Having learned the sign language, I had many talks with these Indians.

STONE CALF and Little Robe were greatly troubled over the disappearance of the buffalo. They told me the same story exactly as told by Frank H. Huston: That the Great Spirit created the buffalo in a large cave in the Panhandle of Texas. That the Evil Spirits had closed up the mouth of the cave, and the buffalo could not get out. They begged me to get permission from the Great Father at Washington for them to go and open up the cave and let the buffalo out. They claimed to know the exact location of the cave. They even wanted me to accompany them.

By the way, this Stone Calf is the same Stone Calf who had had the Germaine girls in captivity. I was called by White Horse to go and see Stone Calf in his last illness, and helped to bury him. He died of pneumonia. Spotted Horse was the chief whose band killed Hennesy and the Englishmen near Bull Foot. I think it was in 1877. Before my meeting with Spotted Horse.

I simply write this to substantiate Huston's article.—O. C. McNARY.

SOMETHING from Conroy Kroder concerning his story in this issue:

Sebastopol, Calif.

It should be observed that "The Ghost Intrigue" has absolutely nothing to do with spiritualism. The *Flaudreaus* are not mediums at all, but are merely stage "magicians" posing as mediums; and, in order to put the "materializing" work over, they use the customary tricks and devices of their profession. Any medium or spiritualist will admit the possibility of such tricks, and that they have often been practised.

Whenever it has seemed to me that any phenomenon described would mystify a reader, I have explained it, or suggested an explanation. There is none mentioned in the story that can not easily be produced by any performing "magician." Indeed,

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I have purposely omitted some of the most striking feats I have seen performed, on this side and in the Orient, such as levitation, elongation of the medium's body, projection of the "psychic force" (?) into inanimate objects, and so on.

Some other parts of the story are pretty true to facts, but names have been changed.—CONROY KRODER.

A LETTER from a comrade in the South. There can be no democracy without freedom of speech and assemblage. Take away or limit this freedom and you have something else, but you no longer have democracy. If America is not right enough and strong enough to dare listen to free opinions freely expressed, then there is something very rotten the matter with America. The remedy is to cut out the rottenness, not to stop or limit freely expressed opinion.

What our forefathers who wrote the Declaration and Constitution handed down to us was not a particular form of government but an everlasting *principle* of government—democracy. And the very essence of the principle of democracy is free speech and free assemblage. If in a mistaken effort to preserve the outward form we sacrifice the essential principle and spirit, then we have betrayed the trust handed down to us.

Atlanta, Georgia.

I wish there could be inscribed in the hearts of every resident on this great continent of ours, "Freedom of speech and assemblage is the very foundation of democracy. Every time a bit of this freedom is taken away, a bit of democracy is taken away."

It is time when something more than a definition of democracy must be made known. It would seem that the day has come when the privileges of a free people are being taken away to such an extent that force looms in the offing, as the only means by which they may guarantee themselves freedom of expression.

AMERICA has, from time to time, lighted the fires of idealism, and trumpeted forth the challenge that the "World must be made safe for Democracy." Would that we first made America safe for democracy.

Intolerance has become our besetting sin. For instance, should I be of an inquiring mind, and, disregarding all perfervid newspaper reports to the effect that "Bolshevism is causing the downfall of Russia," wonder why it is that the "fall" is so long in materializing and thus venture the opinion that there's more to it, Horatio, than we've dreamed of, in our philosophy, my neighbor upon hearing such blasphemy, immediately clamors for my blood and insists that I'm an anarchist and not a fit American. Should I, on the other hand, while appreciating the Christian spirit that dominates the dreamers who insist on world-disarmament, still insist that it is necessary that we safeguard ourselves, by "weighing two hundred, and going around with a chip on our shoulders," certain rabid pacifists assail me as a luster after human life. In other words, it would seem that it is virtually impossible to keep a middle-of-the-road course nowadays, but one must, perforce, espouse one cause or the other and yell lustily when the other side's down.

I HAVE read and re-read the Constitution, as well as the Declaration of Independence. I have tried to conceive the environment of the men who were the authors of these documents. I have contrasted the statement, "All men are born equal" with the reflection that they had, perhaps, not considered the question of slavery as it then existed, as conflicting with that statement. Lastly, I have tried to envision what changes would be made in any given set of rules and regulations of human conduct, and that of nations, or groups of nations, by natural processes of evolution. In so doing I have come to the belief that all things change, somewhat, to meet the changing conditions. However, one basic factor stands out, and that is—these American forefathers of ours did see far enough ahead, and were sufficiently well versed in human nature, to sound a distinct warning—that men must learn to respect the other fellow's views, even as they would desire their own respected. I confess my ignorance and lack of comprehension, but, as I interpret their ideas of democracy, the people of this country *always* had the privilege of changing their form of government, should a majority desire it. In other words (and this will be a horrible thought to certain of our alleged statesmen), if the people of this country want communism badly enough, they can have it by lawful means of the ballot.

BY ALL means, let's revert to the principle of the New England town meetin'. Let's get all the agitators, anarchists, reactionaries, etc., out on the town common, and give each his day in court. The whole *people* will be the judges, and if any of the aforesaid agitators, anarchists, etc., have any idea that will contribute to the progress of the country, let's give 'em a chance to air their views, remembering that 90% of our people are natural-born conservatives and no amount of persuasion will change them from the habit of cautiousness. They will reject any plan that smacks of outright anarchy, by their automatic processes of reaction to their own habitual caution. If we bottle up this energy, we may lose something that will prove a boon to humanity as a whole, for, after all, many of these people *are* dreamers, are seekers after improvement, while, on the other hand, those who seek to profit at the expense of the people will be exposed to the strong light of day and we may thus see that thay are merely malcontents, not Messiahs; merely stirring the pot for the fun of seeing it boil, not for the useful purpose of bringing all the froth to the surface to be skimmed off. We must not forget that the standpatters are also privileged to their day in court, too.

The principle of free speech and assemblage, I believe, is one that should never be denied or abridged, no matter what the provocation. I, too, belong to that group who admire England's method that permits "poisonous gases to escape in the open that, when suppressed, might blow the Empire to

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atoms." It would seem that her method has been tried in the fires of years, and still Britain endures and seems stronger for her adversities. Not that I want to be a follower, but I do feel that America, too, might practise some of Britain's methods with resulting advantage to herself.

That is a good thought—"An American's duty to his country is not to suppress the other fellow's opinion, but to express his own."—P. A. STRACHAN.

A SUGGESTION for an *Adventure* or Camp-Fire flag that could be carried on expeditions and so forth by its members. The drawing gives the idea. Following the colors of our Camp-Fire button, the letters would be in brown on a blue field with border of green. Any other suggestions?

Stockton, Illinois.

Reading the Camp-Fire in your latest issue, I came across the suggestion of a banner to be carried on *Adventure* trips and cruises such as Mr. H. J. Grieser's trip through the Panama Canal in his canoe. This set me to thinking of the banners I have seen, and the enclosed sheet of paper is the result. I sincerely regret that I am not in a position

to secure proper paper and colors, but I have done my best to express the idea.

For myself, I am one of those whose adventures come second-hand, in book form rather than in reality. I sat in the shadows of Camp-Fire for several years, but with this I come nearer the blaze, trying not to edge any of the old-timers from the inner ring to which they have a greater right.—J. E. MAHER.

CERTAINLY his own grandson should be accepted as pretty good authority on "California Joe" and the manner of his death. The following is a letter from Joe E. Milner to Hugh Pendexter. Mr. Milner says he wrote me several years ago on the same subject. I'm sorry his letter was one of those that hasn't happened to come out of our Camp-Fire cache when we drew on it.

Portland, Oregon.

I was very much interested in your letter and also Captain North's about "California Joe" in *Adventure* of June 10th. I wish you would forward this letter to *Adventure* for the benefit of the *Adventure* readers as to who "California Joe" was and also the facts regarding his death.

"CALIFORNIA JOE" was my grandfather on my father's side of relationship. His true and real name was Moses Embree Milner. He was born near Stanford, Kentucky, on May 8, 1829. He was foully murdered at Fort Robinson, Nebraska, on October 29, 1876; he was buried in the post cemetery at Fort Robinson, and his remains still lie there.

These are the facts of the case as I received them from the Secretary of the War Department some years ago; also from his two sons George Milner and Charley Milner of this city, who were in the Black Hills at the time of his death.

I was fortunate some years ago in meeting a man by the name of Ritchie who was in Fort Robinson the morning of "California Joe's" death. He knew "California Joe" very well, and he helped to lay him in his final resting-place. My two uncles, Charley and George Milner, were a hundred miles from Fort Robinson when their father, "California Joe," was killed.

Mr. Ritchie's story of his death is as follows and is backed up for the actual truth as to the facts by my two uncles who came to Fort Robinson shortly after "California Joe's" death:

"CALIFORNIA JOE" was killed by a young man whose name was Thomas Neukem who went to the Black Hills in 1875. He was born and raised in Geryais, Oregon, and was in his early twenties when he killed "California Joe." "California Joe" knew Neukem in Deadwood and would have killed him there, but he told Neukem he was not worth killing, and spared his life. Neukem belonged to that same gang that killed "Wild Bill" Hickok.

On the 28th of October, 1876, in the evening, "California Joe" and Thomas Neukem had a row at Fort Robinson, but they quieted down and shook hands and called the row settled. "California Joe," taking Neukem at his word, paid no more attention to him. Several half-breed Indians who did not like "California Joe" went to Neukem and told him that "California Joe" was going to kill him on sight, which was not the truth.

The next morning, October 29, 1876, "California Joe" was standing half bent over, explaining something to two Sioux Indians. Neukem was hid up behind a wood-pile on a bank about fifteen feet high and about thirty feet away, with an Army carbine. As "California Joe" bent over with his back to Neukem, Neukem fired, the ball striking "California Joe" in the left shoulder and coming out in his right breast. "California Joe" threw up his hands and hollered to one of the soldiers near there by the name of Pat:

"Pat, I am shot. Who shot me?"

These were his last words. He walked one hundred yards to his cabin and fell dead in the doorway. Neukem was put into the guardhouse and fourteen days later released. He went to Deadwood and, bragging about it, was again put into jail. By this time "California Joe's" two sons, Charley and George, had got word of their father's death. Charley got into Deadwood just one-half hour after Neukem was released from jail. Neukem shortly after was shot to death for the foul and cowardly murder of one of the makers of frontier history. He begged for his life when cornered and caught, but his pleadings did no good, and he lies in an unmarked grave in the Black Hills.

"California Joe" was a great friend of Wild Bill Hickok, Buffalo Bill, Texas Jack, Colorado Charley.

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I could write a great deal more of him and tell many things that have never yet come into print. I was personally acquainted with Buffalo Bill, and he told me he knew "California Joe" in Hays City, Kansas, several year before he was killed at Fort Robinson.—JOE E. MILNER.

P. S.—At the time of "California Joe's" death he was 47 years, 5 months and 21 days. I think this letter will clear up without a doubt California Joe's death, birthplace and age, as he was my grandfather and I surely ought to know.— J. E. M.

NOW here is a letter from one of our writers' brigade, setting forth his troubles, and mine, and maybe yours. I persuaded him to change his decision and let me pass the problem on to you. Meanwhile I've made two suggestions—that he use the woman-element, though in minor degree, in his tales of medieval France and that he also give us some more stories of the vikings, among whom the love-element played no such vital part.

Berkeley, California.

It's two years and a half since my first story of old France went to you. During that time I have sent you—if my count is right—eight stories with that setting—five clustering about *Faidit* and three about *Cercamon*. I don't believe you guess how much downright labor went to the making of those stories; and most of the labor was expended on a single question—how on earth to contrive a plot for a story which, though set in medieval France, should contain no love-element.

I'M NOT asking, and don't want, any preferential treatment. The readers of *Adventure* have expressed themselves clearly to the effect that they don't want love-stories, and the magazine has quite properly shaped its policy to suit what its readers want. That's good business and good judgment. Your attitude on that matter is quite just, and none would endorse it more cordially than I. As a fair man, you can't permit one author more latitude than another, and a decent author wouldn't ask it. You have, to be sure, stated in Camp-Fire that occasionally, when a story is exceptionally interesting and well done, you may publish it even though it has a love-element; and I am with you strongly both on your attitude there and on the manner in which it is carried out in actual practise. Nor would I ask any extension—least of all on my own behalf—of the latitude already shown.

But in view of your question concerning my stories, I want to let you know just what my difficulties are, and what I propose to do about them. It's the most difficult thing I ever tackled to write a story set in medieval France without a love-element. I've done it in eight stories, and almost busted myself doing it. But though I've tried again and again to work out plots for stories of old France during this year, both for the *Faidit* novel and for shorts, I've not been able to dope out a single acceptable plot. I don't believe the *Faidit* novel as I've at last shaped it would suit you. Stories *of this kind* simply won't be written without some love-element—not necessarily much, but some. I might be able to hammer out a few in the course of a long time, but the eight already published seem to have exhausted my ingenuity so far.

THE reason is this: I'm somewhat saturated with the history of medieval Europe, and naturally it's hard for me to get away from historic fact when I write stories. Now as a matter of cold, sober history, the Frenchman living at any time between 1080 and 1500 gave most of his waking thoughts to the subject of love. Medieval France made a cult of love; the troubadours and trouvères were its high priests, and every man of any social status outside of the priesthood was a worshiper. Every aspect of love was discussed, formulated, put into practise. France set the pace, and all the world followed. The reason Aliénor of Aquitaine exercised such a tremendous influence on history was that all the western world knew of her as the woman whom troubadours everywhere had hailed as Queen of Love; at one time or another almost every great noble of France aspired to her hand and shaped his policy according. Every medieval court was a court of love; the whole conception and institution of chivalry had its roots in the doctrine of courtly love. Almost all medieval non-religious literature was a literature of love: even the Nibelungenlied is drenched with ideas of courtly love derived from the French troubadours. It was the love-poets who came to England in Aliénor's train who, more than any other single force, changed the character of England's civilization from a rough and semi-barbaric feudalism to the courtly, polished thing it had become by Chaucer's time. The Crusades themselves were the outgrowth of an idealism determined by the ideas of courtly love quite as much as by religious fervor. This isn't just my view; it's historic fact. Every medieval gentleman —however much of his time he spent in hunting or war—was occupied in his thoughts more with love than with any other one thing. Froissart himself, in his own lifetime, was known not as the chronicler of wars and statecraft but as a poet of love. The middle ages simply couldn't get away from love, and didn't want to.

I'VE shaved historic truth pretty fine—come mighty near to misrepresenting it—in my *Faidit* and *Cercamon* stories, just because I've left out the love-element. Imagine any real troubadour knocking about without any love-affairs, as I've made *Cercamon* do. Imagine such a soldier as *Pierre Faidit* fighting his way through life, in contact with courts, without falling in love. And when the poet or soldier of the middle ages fell in love (and they always did) they made love the mainspring of their acts; in the thick of battle their courage was sustained by it. The unity of France in the reign of Louis VII was disrupted by the quarrels of two princes over the love of a woman; it was in the first instance a love-affair that set Richard against his father, Henry II; England became an empire with French possessions that led up to the Hundred Years' War—simply because Henry Plantagenet fell in love with the divorced wife of Louis VII.

Now the point of all this is that one can't leave love out of stories of medieval France without distorting history past all recognition. "Hamlet" without *Hamlet* isn't a patch on the middle ages without love. And when I sit down to work out a story of medieval France that shall be devoid of a

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love-interest, I simply can't get away from the fact that cutting out love cuts out the motivation for almost any conceivable plot a story of this period could have. To be sure, there were events and situations in the middle ages in which women did not figure; but they were mighty few in comparison with those which women and love played a big part; and when one tries to use loveless situations as the basis for a medieval tale, he runs the great risk of turning out what is merely a cross-section of history—a fact-article—instead of a story. "Complication" meant *love* in the middle ages.

NOW what am I going to do about this? I had thought of asking you to print this letter in Camp-Fire, and to ask for an expression of opinion from the readers about the advisability of permitting a moderate use of the love-element in medieval stories—about as much use of it as Doyle makes in "The White Company"; but I've decided against any such request. It wouldn't be fair to the men who write modern stories, and it would also reopen the whole question of the love-element, against which the readers have already decided. That issue is settled, and I haven't any right to reopen it.

So far as I can see, my only possible course is to recognize frankly that the veto on the love-element must curtail my production. I'll try my best to write stories—as good ones as I can—on medieval France without that element. I probably sha'n't succeed very often; the number of stories I shall be able to send you will probably therefore be few and somewhat far between. I'll send them to you whenever I can write them, and shall simply have to apologize for their fewness. I'll try to make them extra good.—ARTHUR G. BRODEUR.

Fair enough, isn't it? And even the most hardened wretches among us probably can, for the sake of his stories as a whole, manage to stand what woman-interest Mr. Brodeur is compelled to put into them for the sake of trueness to the times and their conditions.

AN INTERESTING look-in on Kit Carson—a letter to me from G. A. Wells of our writers' brigade. And won't he persuade his friend to stand up and talk to us himself?

New Albany, Indiana.

Did I ever tell you that I have a friend here who was an intimate of Kit Carson? In his youthful days before the Civil War he was a lieutenant in the Army, serving in the West when that part of the country was bleeding raw. Once he escaped scalping by the breadth of a hair.

HE AND Carson were what would now be called "buddies," and when in the field on campaign ate and slept together in the same tent. Carson was a gentleman, very quiet and reserved, never boastful, and while a very brave man he was extremely cautious and never underrated the Indian. True, he hated the Indian, believing that the Indian could never be civilized, but at the same time he always gave the Indian a sporting chance for his life, and Indian women and children were safe in his hands. When guiding troops against the reds he was careful about the camping-ground, selecting sites that could not be surprized, preferring hilltops.

My friend and Carson were one evening sitting in their tent, and my friend was reading one of those cheap paper-back books so many of which used to be written by writers who had never seen the West, supposedly portraying the lives of men like Carson. Carson was the hero of the book my friend was reading. He read aloud to Kit a particular illuminating bit of Kit's "life," and when he finished Kit rose up on his hind legs and roared—

"It's a —— dirty lie!"

He appeared pretty angry about it.

SEVERAL YEARS AGO my friend was approached in his office by a book-agent with several "Lives" to sell. Among them was "The Complete Life of Kit Carson." Naturally my friend was interested, and the agent, seeing the interest, concentrated on that book. He proudly showed my friend a facsimile of Carson's signature on one of the fly-leaves of the book, declaring that it had been photographed from the original. My friend laughed and sent the agent away. He says that Kit Carson couldn't write his own name.—G. A. WELLS.

THIS anti-weapon law in Great Britain seems to run true to form—disarms the decent citizens and arms the crooks:

Prestatyn, N. Wales, Great Britain.

Am with you with regard to Sullivan Act, don't you call it? We have a Firearms Act similar to yours and it's—rot. All decent citizens register arms (rifles and pistols only—shotguns do not come under the act, for which thanks), and very often give them up. The crooks keep theirs. You have to register for cartridges and have a —— of a time and probably get none. Can't see it has done any good either.—WILLIAM J. COOPER.

A FEW words from Bill Adams in connection with his story in this issue:

I'd better say a word or two as I'm here about "The Helmsmen of the *Harper*" for Camp-Fire. I've no doubt that a holler will go up from some of the nowadays sailors who read it. They'll say that it's not possible for any man to steer a running ship by the feel of the wind on the back of his neck. Well, maybe 'tisn't; but if a man knocks around long enough amongst men, in tight corners, he'll see some most thundering impossible things done, for sure.

Also they'll say that a man can't learn to steer so quickly. Well—let 'em. We all know that the best helmsman is some new kid who has never set hand to a wheel-spoke. He's so scary that he clings right on the course—till familiarity brings carelessness.

I was, a few months ago, aboard a number of old square-riggers, some of which I knew over twenty years ago. They've one and all been fitted with donkey-engines to save the hands the trouble of

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hoisting their tops'ls, etc., and also to heave in the anchors. They've got *shower-baths* fitted, fore and aft, for mates and men! My ——! I saw one of the toughest old hookers that ever ran blood from her scupper-holes *with shower-baths fitted fore and aft!* And I tell the truth when I say that her figurehead blushed when I rowed under her bows. Think of shower-baths on a square-rigger, eh? We took ours green, over the weather rail, with little hunks of ice to tinkle all along the railings and to clink upon the hatch coamings. Well—new fashions nowadays! I got a letter from an old boatswain a few days ago telling me that he understood that nowadays the "bull-whanger" instead of being made of canvas is made of candy; striped red and white.

HOWEVER, while it may seem a stretch of the imagination to depict *Squinters* the crimp steering the *Harper* in the dark night through a gale of wind by the feel of the wind on the nape of his naked neck, I, personally, believe it could be done. The *Harper* was a fine ship, and a dandy packet when running.

One of the best of my sea memories is of steering a lean four-master under six tops'ls through a southerly buster westward of the Horn with a first voyage apprentice to help me at her lee wheel. It was a crisp, snow-squally morning with a savage wind out of the south. The blow broke on us suddenly in the early night. Two ships in company with us, the *Illawarra* and *Matterhorn*, lost every sail they had set when the breeze came—a full suit barring royals. They hove to and rode it out, while we ran like a stag-hound through the glades of a water hell.

We passed several ships hove to, not daring to run. Some day I'm going to take a crack at writing the tale of that old lean bark—now with all her company long since quiet on the ocean bed.

Yes—I think a man like *Squinters* could hold a ship by the feel of the wind.

SOME readers may say that the brutality of the sailors' boarding-master is overdone. Let 'em.

In Portland, Oregon, I think in '98 (near thereabout anyway) the runners from Sullivan's boarding-house took off a crew to the big full-rigger *Wiscomb Park*. They were all apparently dead drunk, doped, senseless. One of them was a dead man, and the mate found it out after the *Wiscomb Park* was over the Columbia bar, bound for Europe.

One hardly could overdo the brutality of the old water-front days. It's different now.—BILL.

THE following on pro-English histories in our schools, taken from the Fort Wayne, Indiana, *Journal Gazette*, was sent in by Geo. A. Zerr of "A.A." The average U. S. history used in our schools is a very, very sad piece of work and can usually be counted on to dull or kill a child's interest in the story of his country. It is written by hereditary methods and from an oddly antique point of view—a scientist operating on little children and doing so more for the "advancement of science," and of the scientist, than for that of the unfortunate children. There is, Heaven knows, great room for improvement.

But when the effort to "improve" (or to sell a new book) takes the form of distorting the facts of our national history it is time for the American people to wake up to what is being done to the coming generations of Americans. A historian who gives only seven out of 538 pages to the American Revolution certainly lays himself open either to the charge of a sense of proportion that is very much awry and to a realization of essential values that is very feeble or to the charge of having deliberately so apportioned his space and handled his material that his book will build up a pro-English sentiment in the coming generations of Americans at the expense of their true understanding of their own country's history. Any school history written with any idea of building up any sentiment for or against any foreign nation rather than of stating facts in just light and proportion is a very dirty piece of work, and the writer thereof should lose his right to American citizenship.

The time has come now for real 100-per-cent. Americans to assert themselves as to the character of history to be taught in the public schools and in the public schools of Indiana.

IT IS up to the American people to say whether English propaganda belittling the story of our Revolution and sneering at the heroes of those Plutarchian days shall be forced upon the impressionable minds of the children by any aggregation of educators in the country.

The Muzzey history has been adopted in this State—and out of this bitterly partisan, and, as we believe, miserably unpatriotic volume, your children are to be taught.

This is the history that the commissioner appointed in New York to investigate has denounced as unfit to be taught in the public schools.

It is the history that the Sons of the American Revolution excoriated in their national convention in Nashville.

It is the history that the Grand Army of the Republic and Spanish-American veterans have condemned.

AND it now develops that in Indiana this history was denounced as unfit and unpatriotic by the American Legion in a protest lodged with Mr. Burris, the State superintendent of public instruction.

It is a history that has no space for the mention of Paul Revere's ride, which dismisses Concord and Lexington in forty-one words and devotes but seven out of 538 pages to the American Revolution, the most momentous movement for the liberty of man that the world has ever known.

It is such a history of underhand attacks on American characters and movements as would not

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be tolerated by the most backward, least self-respecting nations on the face of the globe.

In its letter of protest the American Legion of Indiana says:

THE American Legion, department of Indiana, does hereby most earnestly and emphatically enter its objection to the acceptance of either of these books for use in the public schools of Indiana for the reason that the spirit in which they are written is decidedly unpatriotic and biased.

This office is advised that these histories have been rejected by many schools over the country.

Our objections are solely on patriotic grounds as we have no knowledge as to the names of the publishers of either book.

We most respectfully urge the rejection of these two histories.

Not only is the Muzzey book adopted in this State but the other book by Professor West, "A History of the American People"—which is the other book against which the legion protests.

IT IS up to the American people, whose children's impressions of their country and the things for which their country has stood and stands, to determine whether they shall have forced upon them books of alleged "history" bearing all the earmarks of un-American propaganda, which have been denounced and damned as unpatriotic by the—

American Legion.
The Sons of the American Revolution.
The Grand Army of the Republic.
The Spanish-American War Veterans.

It would be unfortunate if it should become necessary for the parents to take their children from their classrooms to point out the slanders, the belittlement, the sneers and the falsehoods that had been taught them during the day in the schools.

That, we submit, is an intolerable outrage.

THE issue has been made and must be met.

For, as has been said, "any nation that will not defend its defenders and protect its protectors is a disgrace to the map of the world."

And any nation that poisons the minds of its oncoming generation against the heroes who made it a nation is so putrid that it smells to heaven.

It is to be hoped that the full protest of the American Legion and these other organizations may be published to the world, and that real Americans will make it their business to protect their children against this poison.

SO FAR as I remember, we've never talked about poisonous fish at Camp-Fire. Looks as if there were plenty of adventure in a poisonous fish. Certainly is in a spoiled fish. The following is from a comrade who is Chief Draftsman, Public Works, at Cavite. I wish we could reproduce the excellent drawings that accompanied his letter. I wish, too, that more of the old-timers who've been reading our magazine since the first issue in 1910 would come forward at Camp-Fire. Always particularly glad to hear from them, though no one need get the idea that he should sit silent for some little time at Camp-Fire before talking to us. When you're in, you're in, and that's all there is to that.

Naval Station,
Cavite, Philippine Islands.

I have been a reader of *Adventure* from its first number and have been tempted several times in the past to "butt in" to the extent of supplying certain items of information which I happened to be able to give.

Your hearty invitation in the issue of Feb. 10th decided me to submit the following concerning poisonous fishes in reply to questions by Fred Royal, Pittsburg, Pa., in a number some time ago.

I am not a scientist or "ologist" in any sense of the word but am interested in lots of curious things which fall under my observation and, being of a rather investigating turn of mind, generally try to "get the right dope" on them. In this case the Bureau of Science of the Philippine Islands supplies the scientific names, as well as certain other data used in the enclosed article.—L. W. FONTAINE.

Poisonous Fishes

A noted authority on this subject (Dr. Jacques Pellegrin of France) who has made an extensive study of poisonous fishes, states that "any species of fish may be poisonous under certain circumstances, under the right conditions certain species are always poisonous and certain species are more or less poisonous at all times." The latter two classes only are mentioned in the following article. The poison itself is a specific poisonous alkaloid that produces a disease or condition known as "ciguatera," characterized by severe pains in the stomach, partial paralysis, and, in severe cases, death. This poison has its origin in the ovaries and testes of the fish during the spawning season and seems to be produced only in the tropics, as certain of the species which are also found in colder waters are not then poisonous.

The "Botiti" Family. The fishes known to Filipinos as "botiti" and to Americans variously as "puffers," "blow-fish," "balloon-fish," Tetræ-dontidæ, should never be eaten. Most of the deaths in the Philippines caused by eating poisonous fishes have been found to be the result of eating some kind of "botiti." There are fifteen species of the "botiti" in the Philippines, and it is certain that all of them are poisonous at least during the hot months. One of the very poisonous "botiti," Spheroides Sceleratus, Forster, is called "tinga-tinga" around the island of Basilan where it is very common. All of the "botiti" are easy to recognize as they have no scales, the skin is slimy and is smooth (except on some parts of the body, especially the belly, where small prickles are usually to be found) and have large heads, wedge-shaped bodies, small fins and a rather disagreeable odor. They have only four teeth (two in each jaw) which are very large and so broad that they form a kind of beak. All "botiti" can swell themselves up until they resemble little balls with small fins and a beak attached. When caught and landed they usually swell themselves up with air and when in this condition, if lightly struck or scratched on the belly, make a croaking noise. This noise is probably

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only the result of the air being forced through the throat and doesn't prove the presence of vocal chords or a voice.

The most prominent members of the "botiti" family are the "black-striped botiti," the "silver-and-brown botiti" probably the most common kind) the "tinga-tinga" or "black-spotted botiti," and the "ringed botiti." Of the kinds mentioned above, the "black-striped botiti" and the "tinga-tinga" are the most poisonous. None of these fish reach any great size, the largest I have seen being about fifteen inches long; and most of the ones found are from four to ten inches in length.

The "Botiting Laot" Family. The porcupine fishes, Diodontidæ, called "botiting laot" by the Filipinos, are easily distinguished by their long, sharp spines which cover the body. Three species are found in Philippine waters, the most common being the "black-spotted botiting laot," Diodon Systrix, Linn. This fish is poisonous and is extremely so in the spawning season.

The "Papaco" Family. These fishes are known as "papaco" in the Tagalog dialect and as "pacoy" in the Visayan, and all seven varieties found in these waters belong to the "trigger-fish" family. All are easily recognized by their curious shape, by the hard plates which cover the body and by the forward fin on the back which has only three spines; the larger (anterior) one of which is "set" or held in its vertical position by the second or middle spine which acts as a catch or trigger—hence the derivation of the common name, "trigger-fish."

It is probable that not all members of this family are poisonous at all times; but it is certain that most of them are poisonous at certain seasons, and their use as food is to to be avoided. Regarding them, David Starr Jordan writes—

"Most of the tropical species of Balistidæ are more or less poisonous."

"Papaco" are all of the same general shape but differ greatly in coloring and marking. The "red-striped papaco," Balistapus Undulatus, Park, is the most common in this vicinity. This fish is a rich brown in color with narrow red lines over its body and has a large oval black spot at the base of the tail. The largest member of this family, the "green papaco," Balistes Flavimarginatus, Ruppel, is a beautiful pale green in color with dark-green bands through its fins. Individuals are occasionally caught which are as much as eighteen or twenty inches long, but "papaco" this size are very rare, the average size being about seven to nine inches in length.

The "Pacol" Family. The "pacol," "one-spine fishes" or "file fishes," Monacanthidæ, are not credited with being actively poisonous at any time except during the spawning season (April to July), but as their flesh at all times is so bitter and offensive to the taste as often to cause vomiting and stomach pains, it is possible that they are mildly poisonous at all times.

There are eleven kinds of "pacol" in the Philippines, and they do not vary greatly in their ground color (usually a dull gray shaded to light gray or white on the belly) and all have the one spine only on the back; all have the typical rough, scaleless skin which makes this family easy to identify. Some kinds are marked with brown, blue-brown or blue spots or bands. The most common kind is the brown-spotted pacol," Monacanthus Chinensis, Bloch. Another fairly common kind is the "blue-spotted pacol," Osbeckia Scripta, Osbeck, which is distinguished from the other kinds by blue spots on its body and by the fact that its spine is shorter.

Fishes that are poisonous under certain conditions. In addition to the above-mentioned fishes which are generally classed as being actively poisonous, there are a few species found in Philippine waters that are poisonous during the spawning season only, which, in nearly all species, is during June, July and August. These are a bright-red fish called "suga" in the Tagalog dialect and "baga-baga" in the Ilocano, Myripustis Murdjan, Forkal; the very large "barracuda" called "rompicandado," Sphyræna Langsar, Bleeker; a small, dark-bodied goby, called "biat," Zonogobius Semifasciatus; and a species of herring called "tamban," Clupea Longiceps. There are four other species of "tamban," Clupeidæ, that are credited with being more or less poisonous, especially in India and Ceylon; but no authentic case of poisoning from this source has been established in the Philippines. However, there is little doubt that they should not be eaten during the spawning season.

The small "barracuda" (up to about eighteen inches in length) may be eaten at any time and are really an excellent fish, but the larger ones should not be eaten at all during the spawning season. Some fishes, such as the bright-colored "mulmuls," Labridæ and Scaridæ, become poisonous when they feed on certain poisonous mussels, holothurians or polyps and their use should be avoided as an article of food although no serious case of poisoning from this source has yet been established in the Philippines.

BE MARKING down the titles of your favorite stories for our annual vote by readers on the best fiction published in the magazine during the year. When you have finished the December 30th issue write down in order of preference the names of the ten that head the list, and ten more for honorable mention if you wish, and send them in to us. This helps us to print the kind of stories you like.—A. S. H.

SERVICES TO OUR READERS

Lost Trails, for finding missing relatives and friends, runs in alternate issues from "Old Songs That Men Have Sung."

Old Songs That Men Have Sung, a section of "Ask Adventure," runs in alternate issues from "Lost Trails."

Camp-Fire Stations: explanation in the first and third issues of each month. Full list in first issue of each month.

Various Practical Services to Any Reader: Free Identification Card in eleven languages (metal, 25 cents); Mail Address and Forwarding Service; Back Issues Exchanged; Camp-Fire Buttons, etc., runs in the last issue of each month.

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Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts.

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the section in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert may give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelop and *full* postage, *not attached*, are enclosed. (See footnote at bottom of page.) Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose section it seems to belong.**

Please Note: **To avoid using so much needed space each issue for standing matter and to gain more space for the actual meat of "Ask Adventure" the full statement of its various sections and of "Lost Trails" will be given only in alternate issues. In other issues only the bare names of the sections will be given, inquirers to get exact fields covered and names and addresses from full statement in alternate issues. Do *not* write to the magazine, but to the editors of the sections at their home addresses.**

1—3. The Sea. In Three Parts
4, 5. Islands and Coasts. In Two Parts
6, 7. New Zealand and the South Sea Islands. In Two Parts
8. Australia and Tasmania
9. Malaysia, Sumatra and Java
10. New Guinea
11. Philippine Islands
12. Hawaiian Islands and China
13. Japan
14—17. Asia. In Four Parts
18—25. Africa. In Eight Parts
26. Turkey and Asia Minor
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30. Scandinavia
31. Germany, Czecho-Slovakia, Austria, Poland
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36, 37. Mexico. In Two Parts
38—44. Canada. In Seven Parts
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Airplane Accidents

WHAT! Are ninety-five per cent. of all accidents preventable?

Question:—"1. Is it true that 95 per cent. of the airplane accidents in the U. S. today occur in obsolete or obsolescent equipment?

2. If so, why does the Government permit this? Do we have regulating machinery?

3. If not, can accidents, in your opinion, be eliminated?

4. Why do manufacturers not put a stop to this?

5. Why are modern planes more safe?

6. What is a nose-dive, and if, as it seems, this causes all deaths in flying why do pilots persist in doing this unnecessary stunt?

I have followed reports regarding airplanes for some time, and it seems that most accidents can,

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with proper regulations, be avoided. However, I may be wrong in this. Enclosed please and stamped, addressed envelop for reply."—LAWYER.

Answer, by Maj. Schauffler:—I was very happy indeed to receive your letter, for it gives me an opportunity of discussing and outlining some of the factors actually holding up aeronautical progress in the United States at the present time.

Let me take this opportunity of stating that I think your questions are very well taken, and if it is an indication of the thought the American public is giving to this subject at this time it presages early constructive study and subsequent legislation, and the general speeding up of commercial flying in the United States.

I shall answer each question specifically, with a short observation in each instance.

1. Yes. I think that more than ninety-five per cent. of the accidents in the United States are attributable to the airplane falling out of control, due to a loss of flying speed. A modern, up-to-date airplane will not whip-stall or tuck into the ground precipitously, but, on the contrary, swashes down freely.

By that I mean that a modern plane will not go into a nose-dive and crash into the earth nose on. It will keep its balance to a great extent and will come down very much like a leaf. Of course it will hit fairly hard, but I fully believe that in nine cases out of ten it will not hit hard enough to kill the people in it.

I believe that ninety-five per cent. of the airplane accidents in the United States today could be avoided by the use of modern equipment; that the modern plane has not the nose-diving faculty or whip-stalling practise that is prevalent in military planes, designed for speedy maneuverability, high altitude and other military qualifications. I will go even further and state that the Government should pass a regulation forbidding the use of planes of this type except by the Army and Navy and then only active-service type planes (*not training-planes*).

Some people will of course say that if planes of this type are dangerous why should the Army and Navy pilots be allowed to use them? The answer is this. If our Army and Navy are to keep in training for war the officers who are to be called on in time of war must be kept in practise. Dynamite and explosives are handled daily by Army and Navy officers. Dynamite is dangerous, but we must know how to handle it. There is always a risk in everything we do—even walking across the street here in Washington is dangerous.

2. Unless you can say that the Government's attitude of *laisser faire* is condoning this and thereby sanctioning it one can not say that the Government permits it. Public opinion is against it, but there has been no legislation. In one or two States there exists regulating machinery, but it is in nearly every case both inadequate and inoperative, and will be so until Federal regulation comes along to supply the need. In my opinion there is a moral obligation on the part of our lawmakers to bring about this legislation at the earliest possible moment. If our Congressmen were not so near-sighted and so far behind the times they would have made proper regulations long before this. A few are trying to put it across, but what can they do against an overwhelming majority?

3. Yes. I think abnormal accidents can be eliminated. I realize that there will always be a normal number of accidents in flying as in everything else, although I believe that in straight commercial flying over well-organized air routes the hazard on normal accidents is as low as, if not lower than, with the automobile.

4. The manufacturers are not engaged in making commercial planes. They are busy designing and building aircraft for the Government departments. There are no operating companies that can be termed a market for the commercial plane; in other words, there is no incentive for the manufacturers to go ahead and build commercial planes of a modern design, as mentioned in my first paragraph. This is one of the difficulties of commercial aviation in the United States today—a vicious circle exists. The aircraft manufacturers claim there is no market, and the would-be operators claim there is no commercial plane in production in the United States.

5. For the same reason that a modern Pullman car is more safe than a car built in 1900. To be more specific, they are safer because aeronautic research has produced air-foils which, giving a better commercial pay-load ratio for power expended, at the same time do not whip-stall or permit the "bottom to fall out" when flying speed is launched, for the plane tends to parachute itself down as it were.

6. What is known as a "nose-dive" is the evolution an obsolete plane makes when out of control, when it has lost flying speed. This is not always done intentionally by the pilot, although it is a favorite stunt performance of exhibition pilots. In a nose-dive a plane is falling out of control because the elevators, ailerons and rudder are in such a position with respect to the slip-stream that they are inoperative.

This condition, however, is easily overcome, provided the pilot has sufficient altitude, for with ease he can regain a renewed grip of his controls on the slip-stream and regain his normal flying position. However, with obsolete planes the pilot is often forgetful near the ground, or his controls are not as sensitive as they should be, and he unfortunately fails to recognize the fact that he is losing his *vitesse*. A plane stalls at the beginning of a nose-dive and hits the ground before the pilot is able to recover. Most accidents, as you have probably observed, are what might be termed "one-hundred-foot accidents," and in almost every case where the pilot had an altitude of over three hundred feet he would recover before hitting the ground, perhaps alighting with only minor breakages, if any.

Trading in Northeastern Siberia

WHY a second-hand rifle is regarded as a "dead man's gun:"

Question:—"I am anticipating making a trip to the Anadir River in Siberia in the course of the next year in quest of furs, minerals and general adventure. What are my chances of procuring same, and should I find the two former ones? Will I experience any difficulty in getting them out of the country? I understand the Russians are antagonistic toward Americans leaving that country with gold or furs. Is it necessary to be familiar with the Eskimo language? It has 7 letters, hasn't it?

Any hints upon equipment and caliber of rifles, trading, climate and customs will be greatly appreciated. How would you consider the most

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feasible way of getting there?"—R. P. Mackie, Ketchikan, Alaska.

Answer, by Capt. Oliver:—The district you mention is all right for placer mining, but the last reports I had were that there was quite a tough bunch working there and outsiders were looked upon with disfavor. The trading there is too well organized for you to make much at it except to pick up a few furs that the regulars do not want.

The north coast is good for trading, and the farther you go to the northwest the better business you will have.

Most any kind of launch could make it from Nome to East Cape, and with about $2,000 worth of trading-goods you could leave there about the middle of July and run along the coast as far as North Cape, trading on the way, and pick up white and red fox, polar bear and hair-seal skins and walrus tusks, which you could dispose of for $10,000.

For trading in that country get only the best. The natives will pay well for good stuff, and you can't put anything over on the men, but if you happen to strike a village where the men are away hunting you can trade the women some 5-and-10-cent-store jewelry and get away with it, but it is bad policy. They want buckskin needles, but no thread unless you can get some pure linen; awning material, calico—loud colors—good tobacco—they are unusually fond of Star chewing—good, heavy butcher and hunting knives, flour, tea and Domino sugar, which must be in packages—they are very particular about that and won't trade for anything if the package is a little damaged; .30-30 Winchesters and ammunition. Rifles must be new, because the natives have a custom of burying everything with the dead and if offered a second-hand rifle they say—

"Dead man's gun; no good."

In trading let the native pick over your stuff and decide what he wants. If you have something he particularly wants he will pay well. I once offered one a $2.75 knife for a fawnskin and he refused; then he picked up my used tooth-brush and gave me the skin.

A knowledge of the language isn't necessary because they are very good at making you understand by signs. I don't know how many letters are in the language, but it resembles the Kanaka, and all the Kanaka words I knew were understood by the natives at Cape Serdzekamen.

One way to get there is to go on the *Victoria* from Seattle. You can work your way if desired as the traffic is heavy on the "up trip," and the steward always needs extra help. Then upon arrival in Nome you can make inquiries as to all recent developments as there are traders going back and forth all the time and conditions are changing from day to day now. But whatever you do don't try anything without authority from the local authorities, because you may find all your stuff seized and the State Department won't do anything for you. Look out for the black-jack games on the *Victoria* also, as many men have been broke while making the trip.

Regarding equipment: You may take your favorite rifle, but be sure to have plenty of ammunition, because .30-30 is the only kind you will be able to get from the traders there.

Regarding clothing: Don't attempt to take any cold-resisting clothes, because these Eskimos excel all others in tanning and making up deer and seal-skin clothes, and you can get a complete outfit quite reasonably.

Don't anticipate any trouble with the natives, because they are peaceable, honest and hospitable; and, contrary to reports, I never found them afflicted with "cooties."

If you want prospecting why don't you try the St. Lawrence Island? I understand it has never been prospected, and it is easily accessible almost all the year.

If anything more, let me know.

Names and addresses of department editors and the exact field covered by each section are given in the next issue of the magazine. Do not write to the magazine itself.

Lillooet

THE Canadian Northwest has some fierce Indians—but not in the commonly accepted sense. The beautiful Indian maiden of song and story is also disposed of herewith:

Question:—"I am interested in the country around Lillooet, B. C., Canada. I want to get a piece of good rich land, by purchase or homesteading, clear it up or part of it and build a home and farm it and raise whatever the climate will permit.

What kind of a country is it to the northeast of Lillooet, or rather, between Lillooet River and north fork of Bridge River? Describe the country within a radius of fifty miles east, north and west of the town of Lillooet. How about a good location along the P. G. E. Railroad, Pemberton and Lillooet? You may be able to direct me to the very best place for a poor man with about a thousand dollars or two.

How far north of Lillooet is the Fraser River navigable for light-draft boats? I want to know a whole lot about the country along the Fraser and the best location for a settler who loves the wild country and hunting and fishing, etc.

Is there any reliable literature in pamphlet or magazine form that I could get which would be descriptive of the country in question? How about land laws for American citizens who want to locate in Canada and become citizens of that country after the required qualification, term of residence, etc., are accomplished?

Where are the Stick Indians located, and are they friendly to the white man who treats them right, and are there any good-featured women among them? I have read a story running in the *Wide World* magazine about a young man who traveled in the Northwest and ran across the tribes of Stick Indians and said he met with some good-looking Indian girls, intelligent and handsome. What do you know about them?

I will thank you for reference to any publication giving me in whole or in part the information I have asked for herein. Where can I get a good map of something like 24 x 24 inches of British Columbia?

You can answer me in a condensed form if you

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like. I will understand you. I enclose self-addressed, stamped envelop for reply. I thank you."—A. J. FLOYD, Pollock, La.

Answer, by Mr. Carson:—I am sending you a booklet that answers a heap of your questions. Write the Deputy Minister of Lands, Victoria, B. C., for a map of the province and for general information *re* homestead lands.

While the country around Lillooet is supposed to be adapted to mixed farming it is more of a stock-raising proposition; rather too dry for anything else. Better ask the Dep. Min. for information *re* Francis Lake country since I believe this would suit you better. Also ask him to send you a copy of *Heaton's Annual*. These are all gratis.

Now as to Indians, some of them smell pretty fierce but that is as far as the fierceness goes. As for those beautiful Indian maidens, so far as my observation has gone I am of the opinion that they are not found among the Sticks or Stikines but rather belong to an extinct tribe that never existed.

I have seen good-looking breeds, especially where the Indian mother was crossed with a red-headed Scotch Hudson's Bay man; but they are almighty scarce, and white girls are not entirely unknown even in northern B. C.

You might run up to the Stikine River and take a look at what are there if you are still interested; but you will do much better to get a white girl from Seattle or Vancouver if you are looking for a life partner.

You will find the Lillooet district an ideal hunting and fishing country, and in some of the lower valleys along the river-bottoms you might run on a piece of good land.

As to the Fraser, she is a succession of rapids and cascades for many miles northeast of Lillooet, running between high, cañon-like banks. You do not get navigable water till you get to Soda Creek.

Wants a Square-Rigged Ship

SOLD for the price of the copper fastenings:

Question:—"What would it cost to build, rig and equip a full-rigged ship of three masts with the following dimensions: Length at water line 250 or 275 feet; beam, 45 or 50 feet. Or, where can I buy one second-hand in good seaworthy condition? About what price?

What would it cost to build, rig and equip a bark-rigged ship, length at water-line 145 or 150 feet, beam about 25 or 30 feet? Or, where can I buy one second-hand in good seaworthy condition? About what cost?

What would it cost to build, rig and equip a brig-rigged ship, length at water-line about 120 feet, beam about 25 feet? Or, where can I buy one second-hand in good seaworthy condition? About what cost?"—THEODORE G. BRADLEY, Gordon, Tex.

Answer, by Mr. B. Brown:—It is practically impossible to answer your questions in regard to the cost of construction of the various square-rigged vessels, for the one reason, among others, that I do not believe that there have been any vessels of the classes mentioned built for many years past. I don't think there has been a brig built in the last fifty years.

If you want to buy a vessel of the kind, all that are now in existence are for sale for very much less than it would cost to replace them. For example, the *Glory of the Seas*, one of the finest of the old-type clipper ships ever launched, had been lying on the beach at Seattle with her lower masts and bowsprit still stepped, for many months, and has finally been burned to recover her copper fastenings, worth more than anyone was willing to pay for the whole ship.

There are several hundred hulls of wooden vessels, built to be used as steamships by the Shipping Board, which are now for sale at about one-tenth the cost of the lumber that went into them. You could buy one of them and rig her to suit yourself at about the smallest investment that a man ever made for a seagoing sailing-craft.

Address your question direct to the expert in charge, NOT to the magazine.

Big Gold Ingots

COULD you walk off with a thousand-pound bar if you had the chance?

Question:—"The subject of man-loads has been published in the back of *Adventure* at different times.

Some time ago a gentleman returning from Central and South America and the West Indies told me that two merchants of this territory kept their cash reserves in the form of gold bars so heavy that it was impossible for any one man to lift them. This would of course delay any one trying to make away with them—a serious matter to all concerned in matters of this kind.

Some discussion naturally arose as to how heavy this bullion was, or should have been—the aforesaid returned traveler did not know or remember—and as the matter came up again recently it has just occurred to me that you might be able to answer this question.

I looked up the matter somewhat at the time, and as Chinese coolies carry 400-pound bags of coal up an incline, have come to the conclusion that the bars, slabs or ingots weighed, or should have weighed, 200 kilograms each, or about 441 pounds avoirdupois, although the Egyptians are said to have packed gold dust in bags weighing 1,000 pounds each—and solid yellow metal of the same cubic dimensions would weigh somewhat more; say 500 kilograms, or about 1,102½ pounds avoirdupois, which would be about the weight of one of the round bars of the merry Hindu raja mentioned in the poem.

The largest ingots mentioned in history were those of King Crœsus, and these weighed about 5,000 troy ounces each.

Stamped and addressed envelop enclosed.

Kindly publish initials only."—J. L., Jersey City, N. J.

Answer, by Mr. Young:—The incident you mention, of some one having run gold into ingots so heavy that a man could not lift them, is possibly based on some fictional mention in some story or book. I doubt if this were in reality ever done.

A man in proportion to his size can l ft an enormous load and with some slight assistance in getting it upon his back can carry more than a mule. Yesterday a small fourteen-year-old boy picked me up and carried me down a long room on his back. We

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stood back to back, and he locked his arms in mine and picked me up. I weigh 224 pounds. This lad could have easily carried another 76 pounds.

When I was nineteen years old I picked up with my arms and carried for a few paces a casting weighing 640 pounds. Later I carried a sugar-barrel full of chains weighing around 900 pounds and have carried hundreds of barrels of oak-bark extract ranging from 600 to 800 pounds. I used to be a trifle proud of these feats until I got to perusing the "World Almanac" and noted real lifting and carrying feats which made my best look like child's play. If I remember rightly the heaviest lift made with the hands (unassisted with a rope around the neck) is around a ton.

Just what a man can get under and lift with his back is a mooted question. I have seen a man get under a platform upon which twenty-two men were standing and rear up and stand with it for over a minute. Without going into more details it will be safe to say that a man who figured on mere weight being a deterring influence against any one making off with his gold would have to make it into ingots of something like a thousand pounds to feel anything like sure of some one not making off with it. He would not sleep sound if he knew there were some of the strong boys in his vicinity. Also *quien sabe* but what some of them might double-team on it, swing it on a rawhide between two horses, roll it into a dugout or into an ox-cart, or make away with it in some other fashion?

Personally I have never seen any very large ingots. The ones I have seen were about the size of building-bricks, and some of them were double that size. I have seen as much as $400,000,000 in one batch. Doubtless a man can see twice or four times that much in the same place today, for it was at Washington in the mint. I have also seen ingots and bags of dust in several of the Western States and in some of the Latin American countries.

The usual manner of handling this gold in Latin America is to run it into ingots or sack it in bags and put it into a stone *bodega* or vault. When shipping-time comes they get peons and mules and get an escort of guards from the local Government. Now and again bandits swoop down and rob the pack-train of several thousands' worth of gold. As a rule the mine tries to get rid of the bullion when they have some forty or fifty thousand dollars' worth.

I don't say that no one ever did make the ingots so large that a man couldn't lift them; but with so many things against it I doubt that it was ever done in reality.

A Coast Trip by Horseback

JUST how to outfit:

Question:—Am finishing up a four-year enlistment in the Marine Corps. Will be discharged in April, 1923. Intend to go from here to southern California *via* horseback. I will go alone.

Am very fond of horses, but have never ridden any. Following is a list of equipment I believe will be needed. You may add or subtract from this list, or make any comments you like. Please return it in order that I may more clearly see what you have done to it.

Horse. Male? Female? Pony? Mustang? I will want one accustomed to hardship, grazing, etc. Where would I get such a horse hereabouts? How much should I pay? How old should the horse be? How can I tell a good horse? Or should I get someone who knows, to help me buy one? And who?

Of course, never having ridden a horse, I would want one rather peaceful. My idea is to start out from Seattle on foot with a pack on my back and keep moving until I find the horse I want—and at a reasonable price. I shall have all the time in the world, and, I believe, sufficient money. Have been on my own hook in many strange adventures, so know something of what I am doing, and am not likely to back down. I've been in the Hawaiian Islands, Guam, Philippine Islands, China, on a light battle-cruiser, Russian Islands, Siberia, Japan; and I like the semi-desert country in the great Southwest the best of all.

I figure on ending up somewhere in southern California, Arizona or Nevada, take up with some old prospector and learn the game first-hand—not for financial returns but for the life itself. Expenses will satisfy me—if I can make 'em! (Ha-ha!)

Would it be a good plan to buy a horse from Indians? And where would I go to reach them?

How about a saddle? Light, medium or heavyweight? Make? Name? Second-hand? New? Buy with horse? Buy the horse first and fit the saddle on? How much for a saddle?

Saddle-blanket?

Head-harness?

Hobbles? Buy? Make out of rope, etc.? How?

Two saddle-bags? How much? Size? Kind?

Few pounds of oats for horse?

What will not go in saddle-bags, roll up in single heavy wool blanket? Or should I have a sleeping-bag? Kind of bag, or blanket? Price? Weight?

Enough light rope (one-quarter inch or one-half inch) to tie on pack? Extra coil on saddle-horn for picket-line, etc.?

Grub. Bacon or ham? Pounds? Buckwheat flour. Pounds? Package or bag? Salt, pepper. Cans? Bags? Dried fruits, nuts? Small cans of butter—frying, etc.,—one or two small cans pork and beans. Pounds? Onions, potatoes? Pounds?

Cooking-utensils. Frying-pan. (Eight pounds)? Small butcher-knife, fork and spoon? Small aluminum kettle with clamped-down lid? Hand-ax all metal; with sheath for belt?

Gun, etc. .30-.30 Winchester rifle? Plenty shells? Cleaning-rod, jointed; oil; rags? Sheath for rifle? Full length, water-proof canvas case for rifle in sheath?

Clothing, including that worn. 1 pr. trousers (on hand); 1 flannel shirt (on hand); 3 pr. woolen socks (on hand); 1 felt hat (on hand); 1 pr. russet shoes (on hand); 6 handkerchiefs (on hand); 1 light corduroy coat; 1 wide leather belt (on hand); pouch (on hand)?

Miscellaneous. Folding canvas bucket; 3 bars Ivory soap; fish line and assorted hooks; 1 canteen (Size? Kind?); colored, dust-proof goggles with case; radio-lite; reliable compass; cheap radio-lite watch; plenty of old-fashioned matches (water-proof tin can); water-proof pocket match-box. Marble's; large pocket-knife; medium-sized flash-light. (Extra battery? Kind?) Pencils; eraser; post-cards; 1-c. stamps; 1 towel; safety razor and brush; soap-box; tooth-brush and paste; small mirror. Right?

I figure that in the saddle my weight will be about 140; it is now 145. Including myself, saddle, rifle,

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equipment, I estimate the total weight to be 225 lbs. Is that too much for a horse? I would take things easy, perhaps camping 2 or 3 days at favorable spots.

Here is a big question: What route would you advise? Where would I cross large rivers, like the Columbia? What maps should I have? I want a route with plenty of natural scenery, fish, game, easy going. I will probably be in need of small game and fish at times, but how about the game and fish laws?

One more question. In the great Southwest semi-desert country of California, Arizona and Nevada, where would you advise me to go in order to prospect for gold? Preferably, placer or pocket mining to vein. I want to locate in a wild place with water, timber on near-by mountains, plenty of game and fish, etc.

Please do not publish my name in case these questions are printed in *Adventure*."— —— ——, Navy Yard, Puget Sound.

Answer, by Mr. Harriman:—If you have never ridden, the first thing to buy will be some quick-healing dope for your blisters. Next you must learn how to get the lameness out of your legs by massage. A marine on horseback on a fifteen-hundred-mile trip will be some spectacle. I want a photograph of the start and another of the finish. I can imagine the intervening agony.

Horse. The sex will not matter in the slightest degree. Get a well-broken, gentle nag of small size, say eight hundred to nine hundred pounds. Cayuse and mustang apt to be tricky, but very hardy.

Get your horse out in the country, far from a city. Cheaper. Buy second-hand saddle to fit *you*. Use thick saddle-blanket, and it will fit your horse. Learn to ride before starting on trip.

A horse from six to eight years old is best. I do not know prices in Washington. Get some honest expert to judge horse and price, if possible. I have seen a good-enough horse for your trip sold in the country for sixty dollars. An old saddle cost the man twenty-five dollars. They cost more now, since leather and labor have gone up.

Buying an Indian pony would do all right if you knew how to train the brute in the ways of a white man. You would not get an Indian pony or cayuse until you hit the eastern part of Washington.

Saddle. Get one weighing from thirty to thirty-five pounds. A western stock saddle. Any make, as long as the saddle is well built. Second-hand, a maker cuts no ice. You might get far out into the country, buy horse and gear, board with a farmer and learn to ride. You have to learn.

Get saddle that feels right under you, without bunches to hurt the inside of your thighs. A thick blanket under it is imperative, and you must ride "straight up in the middle of the hoss," or you will give him a sore back. I never caused a sore back on a horse in my life, and I have weighed more than two hundred since I was twenty-three.

Any good riding-bridle with a plain snaffle bit. Don't get a spade bit. They are cruel, not necessary. Often one can get a halter headstall with the bit fastened to the cheek-rings by snaps. Then loosening a couple of snaps is all you need do to let him eat.

Hobbles should be of leather and broad, with sheepskin linings to avoid chafing of ankles. Be sure he understands hobbles at start. Just ask any merchant for a sisal rope or say grass rope—five-eighths is a good picket-rope size, or three-quarters of an inch.

Saddle-bags can be had at any army store at about four dollars, all leather. My pair hangs over my head as I write, and they are excellent. Cost $4.25. Army size all alike. Best made. Stacks of 'em down here.

Grain. Carry a small amount and buy as you pass along. Feed a quart.

Tarp. For rolling duffel to carry, a small tarp is good. You must not carry much or your nag will break down. Use tarp to spread bed on at night. Use picket rope to tie pack on and save buying and carrying a second rope. Get prices there. Sixteen-ounce is best.

Grub. Carry only enough for two days' rations at a time and buy fresh as needed. It is a mistake to load up with a lot when passing through a settled country. It is cheaper and easier and better to carry only a small amount and buy often. Here is my list, which I would use if starting out on such a trip: Bacon, a pound; bread, a loaf; pancake flour, a package of Aunt Jemima's or Yankee or Alber's; ⅛-oz. pepper in can, salt in can, sugar in can, coffee in can, four small cans baked beans, a pound of dried apricot and same of prunes, with the tools—knife, fork, spoon, big spoon, metal plate, metal cup, small folding frying-pan, small covered can for making coffee, two-quart covered pail. I would get a cotton sack that would fit each of the last two to keep the smut off my other things. Then after using them would scour with fresh dirt and put in the sack. The coffee-can to fit in pail.

Knife to slice bacon had best be a small butcher-knife. The ax mentioned is correct and big enough for gathering wood for fire. I use a big knife—12-inch blade—which I carry in metal-lined sheath at my belt for that purpose.

Guns. Why the rifle unless you intend to pay for a license in each State you enter? I think you would find a light shotgun would bring you more eats if you travel in the open season for game, but ten dollars fee to each State where you are not a resident is stiff. I would carry nothing save my six-shooter if I were on the trip.

Your clothing list is good all the way.

Miscellaneous list. Folding bucket is good. I think I would carry but one bar of Ivory soap. It is so easy to buy more. Fish-line is right if you get a permit in each State, not otherwise. Canteen holding two quarts is big enough on this trip. Goggles are not needed at all in my opinion. The compass, watch, match-safe, knife, flashlight, pencils, stamps, towel, razor, tooth-brush, *et cetera*, are all right.

Walk your horse. Sit steady in saddle. Moving about, shifting the weight, makes sore back on a horse. A weight of two hundred and twenty-five is not too heavy if the horse is any good and is not forced to hurry. Your plan of camping for a rest of two or three days at intervals is a good one and should bring you and the horse through in good shape.

I advise you to take in Rainier Park, then Crater Lake, then come past Grant's Pass and on down to Crescent City, California. Then ride through the redwoods down to the bay district. From there go east to Yosemite Valley by way of Big Oak Flat Road. See the valley and then drift south to Sequoia Park and see that. Then come on here.

That gives you a lot of wonderful scenery.

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Old Songs That Men Have Sung

Devoted to outdoor songs, preferably hitherto unprinted—songs of the sea, the lumber-camps, Great Lakes, the West, old canal days, the negro, mountains, the pioneers, etc. Send in what you have or find, so that all may share in them.

Although conducted primarily for the collection and preservation of old songs, the editor will give information about modern ones when he can do so and *IF* all requests are accompanied with self-addressed envelop and reply postage (*NOT* attached). Write to Mr. Gordon direct, *NOT* to the magazine.

Conducted by R. W. GORDON, 1262 Euclid Ave., Berkeley, Calif.

HENRY A. ZIPLINSKY of Columbus, Ohio, sends in the following song and says: "I learned it in my youth, when Utah was a Territory. It was sung by the Mormons." It seems to be a genuine song of the plains at the time of the covered wagons, and is well worth preserving.

I will sing you a song, it may be a sad one,
Of trials and troubles when I first began.
I crossed the Missouri and joined a large train,
Which bore us over the mountains and over the plain.

I left my dear kindred, my friends and my home
All over the plains to the mountains to roam.
Without any money provisions to buy
We'd sneak round the hills shooting elk on the sly.

We'd shoot a fat deer and take him to town
To buy flour to bake bread, and tea a few pound;
But we heard talk of Sioux Indians 'way out on the plain
A-killing the drivers and burning the train.

They would kill the poor drivers with arrow and bow;
When captured, the Indians no mercy would show.
We traveled six weeks till we came to a platte;
We pitched out our tents on the end of a flat.

We spread down our blankets on the mossy green ground,
While our horses and mules were grazing around;
They made a bold dash and drew near our train,
And the arrows fell around us like hail and like rain.

But with our long rifles we fed them cold lead,
And many brave Indians around us lay dead.
We shot the brave chief at the head of the band—
He died like a warrior with a rifle in his hand.

When they saw their brave chief lying dead in his gore
They whooped and they yelled, and we saw them no more.
While taking refreshments, we heard a low wail,
And a band of Sioux Indians came out of a dale.

We gathered our horses, got ready to fight,
As the band of Sioux Indians just came in sight.
We sprang to our rifles with a flash in each eye—
"Brave boys," said our captain, "we fight till we die!"

They came down upon us with a whoop and a yell;
By the crack of our rifles, six of them fell.
When they saw their bold comrades lying dead on the ground,
* * * * * * * * * * * * * * *
Our brave little band were only forty-four,
And all these wild Indians were a hundred or more.
* * * * * * * * * * * * * * *
* * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

So we hooked up our horses and started our train,
And fought three more battles this trip on the plain.
And in the last battle three brave men fell—
We laid them to rest in a green shady dell.

Many other songs of this type tell of the trials and disappointments of the pioneers, of the life of the miners, or of exciting events in frontier camps. Such songs are obviously not "folk-songs" at all, but are the work of humble and unknown authors. Nevertheless they were sung and loved by many in the old days. Most of them were printed and circulated in little paper-covered "songsters" which are now hard to find; some of them have appeared from time to time in the columns of newspapers. Send in some more, you older men, and if you have any of the "songsters" that you don't want any longer, send them in too.

ALSO the product of a humble and unknown author, but differing in type from the song printed above, is the following bit, of which I have but little information. It was given me by Mr. Vernon Patterson, who obtained it from his father's "recollection of having heard it sung when a boy." The style resembles that commonly found in Irish broadsides:

I shipped for St. Louis on the steamer *Tyro*,
And the first place I landed was down at Karo.
I was arrested for murder, which made me quite roar—
I'll be a good fellow and do so no more.

Oh, I was arrested and thrown into jail,
With the emptiest stomach, and no one to go bail.
They threw me in jail and locked tight the door—
I'll be a good fellow and do so no more.

What they gave me to eat was dry old corn bread;
What they gave me to sleep on was a buggy old bed;
What they gave me for covering was rags off the floor—
I'll be a good fellow and do so no more.

If the jail gates were opened, as I said before,
I'd go home to my Polly; she's the girl I adore;
I'd go home to my Polly, for she is my wife,
And I'd work for my children all the rest of my life.

Can any one tell me more about this song?

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BY THE way, can any of you send in a complete version of an old-time song that tells how the devil carried an old wife to hell—and brought her back again? Bobbie Burns made a good poem of the story, but I want some versions of the earlier song. One incomplete version begins:

There was an old Dutchman lived near hell;
Come Jen for Jen—come Rolly Marie;
The devil came after his only son,
As the dew rolls over the green val-lee.

"'Tis not your eldest son that I crave,
Come Jen for Jen—come Rolly Marie;
But your scolding wife as she lays in her grave,
As the dew rolls over the green val-lee.

And who knows a more modern song about Stackerlee which contains the following stanza:

Oh, the dogs did howl—the dogs did bark,
When Stackerlee the murderer went creepin' through the dark!
Everybody talk about Stackerlee.

THERE'S just room enough for a negro song from a correspondent who requests me not to print his name:

Oh, good Lord, won't you hand down, won't you hand down
That ladder from earth to Heaven!
Oh, let it down,
And leave it swingin'
And up we'll come
A-shoutin' and a-singin'.

Oh, good Lord, won't you come down, won't you come down
And help us in this meetin'!
Don't send your Son
If you ain't willin';
We got no time
To fool with chillun.

SEND all contributions of old songs and all questions about them to R. W. GORDON, 1262 Euclid Avenue, Berkeley, California. Do not send them to the magazine.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

DECEMBER 30TH ISSUE

Besides the **new serial** and **three complete novelettes** mentioned on the second page of this issue, the next *Adventure* will bring you the following stories:

THE THIRD IN A QUARREL — ***William Byron Mowery***
Trial by combat Eskimo fashion.

THE STORY OF THE KHALIFA — ***George E. Holt***
An Incident in the Affairs of Mohamed Ali
In the tiger's den.

THE DUGOUT CANOE — ***John Scarry***
New Guinea Nemesis.

STANDISH OF THE STAR Y — **A Five-Part Story** — **Conclusion** — ***Gordon Young***
A ranch-owner comes to a show-down.

THE HOLY TIGER — ***John Eyton***
A specter lord of the jungle.

THE EDUCATION OF EDGAR — ***E. S. Pladwell***
The making of a mate.

Still Farther Ahead

IN THE three issues following the next there will be *long stories*, by Harold Lamb, Thomson Burtis, Charles Victor Fischer, Arthur O. Friel, Arthur D. Howden Smith, Garrard Harris, Leonard H. Nason, W. C. Tuttle, Karl W. Detzer, Hugh Pendexter, Gordon Young and Conroy Kroder; and short stories by Clements Ripley, William Harper Dean, Sidney Herschel Small, Raymond S. Spears, Thomas Topham, William Byron Mowery, John Eyton, Gordon MacCreagh and others—stories of Asia Minor, Japan, the jungle, the cattle country, the frontier, the Gulf, the high seas, the Lakes, the war, the Andes, the oil-fields, Indians, vikings, soldiers, cowboys, sailors; of adventurers all the world around.

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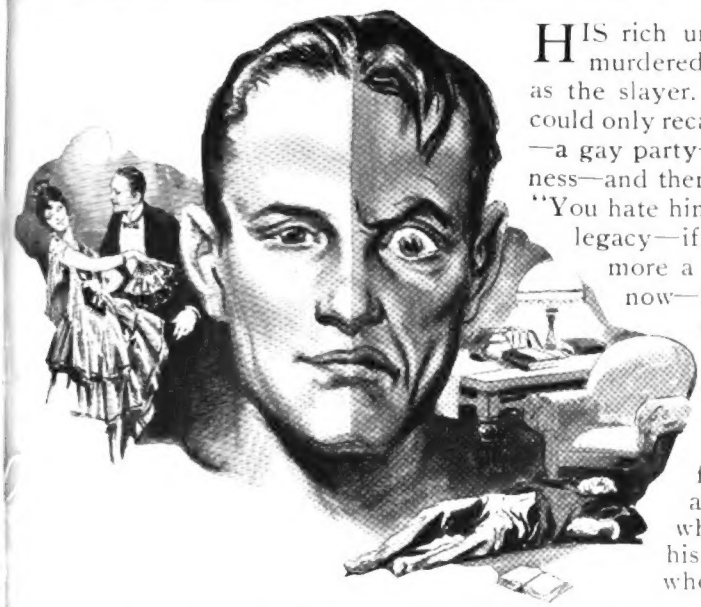
Did Some One Own His Soul in Sleep?



HIS rich uncle had been mysteriously murdered. Everything pointed to him as the slayer. His torture-wracked brain could only recall a beautiful Spanish dancer—a gay party—wine—laughter—forgetfulness—and then—a knocking at his brain—"You hate him—he will cheat you of your legacy—if he were only dead"—once more a sinking into silence. And now—the finger of accusation—his own—the world's.

Was he two people? The man he knew—the man his sweetheart knew—the man his world called a good fellow: And this other—a disembodied mind—a fiend who arose when sleep lulled his body and his conscience—who pillaged and murdered?

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